

OCTOBER 8, 2007

# The American Conservative

## Sycophant Savior



## WESTERN VOLTAGE

In "The Unbound West," Fred Reed seems to have read my mind (Sept. 10). I have reflected lately on the predominance—in fact the near monopoly—of Westerners in the development of science and technology. Indeed, in my own field of electrical engineering, the first and most basic equation,  $E=IR$ , connects voltage, current, and resistance, whose values are measured in volts, amperes, and ohms, each term named for a distinguished European physicist. And similar eponyms are profuse throughout the scientific literature (as in all other fields of intellectual accomplishment).

Reed captures the idea tersely: "The modern world is almost totally a Western invention."

That was an excellent beginning, and its pleasing politically incorrect tone snagged me immediately. But then I was a little disappointed. Rather than wading into the deeper water where most fear to swim, Reed devoted his remaining space to redundant reiterations of the Western superiority theme. His writing would have been much stronger if he had explained the mortal peril that we, the inventors of today's world, are now in and told us what to do about it.

HUGH MCINNISH  
*Huntsville, Ala.*

## CHRISTENDOM REBORN

I have been a subscriber to this magazine for a few years now and have finally decided to write my praises. James P. Pinkerton's "The Once & Future Christendom" is one of the best articles I have ever read—period (Sept. 10). As a youthful believer in the resurrection of its legacy, I found hope and wisdom in Pinkerton's ideas for restoring Christendom.

In this modern age of secular war-mongering and liberal pacifism, Pinkerton's "Council of the West" is a peaceful and religious remedy to the Muslim and

multicultural threat and is only way to revive the great tradition of Christendom. Keep up the good work and the good fight.

ROBERT A. TAYLOR  
*Arroyo Grande, Calif.*

## FANNING FLAMES

While James P. Pinkerton's desire to unify Christendom is noble, his manifest distrust of Islam is frightening. His disdain for non-Christians and his disinterest for a united world outside of Christendom add to this concern.

His call for a Shire Strategy ("the Shire is ours, we want to keep it, and so we must defend it") is presented along with hypothetical inevitabilities of Muslim domination and glorifications of past Christian warriors who defended the West from previous "immigrant invasions." In my opinion, these arguments amount to fear-mongering and flame-fanning. In reading this "call to duty," I am eerily reminded of Pope Urban II's appeal to the Franks in 1096. Once again, a misguided Christian appears to be drawing the battle lines for some inevitable clash of civilizations. He is more concerned with stoking the fire than finding a way to extinguish it.

Pinkerton claims, "to keep the peace, we must separate our civilizations." As Martin Luther King Jr. shudders in his grave, Pinkerton advocates segregation, arguing that we should retreat behind our respective walls, readying ourselves for the climactic battle to come. And to add to our numbers in this fight to preserve our way of life, he's already contemplating how to recruit from impoverished regions like South America.

Pinkerton praises the maxim "*cuius regio, eius religio*." Does he really think this policy will lead to a better co-existence? For being so steeped in historical analogies, he missed the mark on this one. This maxim was the foremost clause of the Peace of Augsburg of 1555, granting freedom to Lutherans in the Holy Roman Empire and dealing an

enormous blow to the Roman Catholic Church. Rather than easing the tensions, this document drew the battle lines, fomenting a tension that manifested itself during the following century of religious wars that devastated Europe. In the end, this maxim prevented Christian unification and ultimate peace.

Pinkerton's reference to Muslims as Sauron—Tolkien's archetype of the world's evil—represents a growing attitude in the West, particularly Europe, where there are increasing fears that multiculturalism provides an insidious entryway for foreign terrorists. The constant threat of terrorism, coupled with a growing immigrant population that remains dedicated to their native cultures and less interested in assimilation, has given rise to a dramatic upsurge of racist resentments across European populations.

Filled with hypothetical nightmares and misguided parallels to Tolkien, Pinkerton's Shire Strategy will not lead to a more peaceful existence. A consequence of this intensifying xenophobia could be a backlash of anger, bitterness, and further alienation of Muslim populations who are already frustrated by limited opportunities, high unemployment, and poor housing conditions. Faced with such a dire predicament, Europe could experience a more volatile racial divide and witness an increase in radicalization within the impoverished segments of its immigrant population. In essence, we could create our own monster, adding to the numbers of radical Islamists and playing into the hands of their cunning leaders.

C. GASPERINI  
*Via e-mail*

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[EXECUTIVE]

## BUSH IN DREAMLAND

In his recent televised address, President Bush spoke about a place he called “free Iraq,” which Americans are dying (and killing) to defend. This “free Iraq” will counter Iran, marginalize al-Qaeda, and set a stirring example of thriving democracy throughout the Middle East.

Regrettably, it is an entirely imaginary place. There is no more a “free Iraq” than there was four and half years ago at the time of the invasion. Iraq is the name of a place populated by people with sectarian and tribal loyalties who fear and hate one another—a place from which a huge portion of the middle class has fled to escape the chaos that America unleashed.

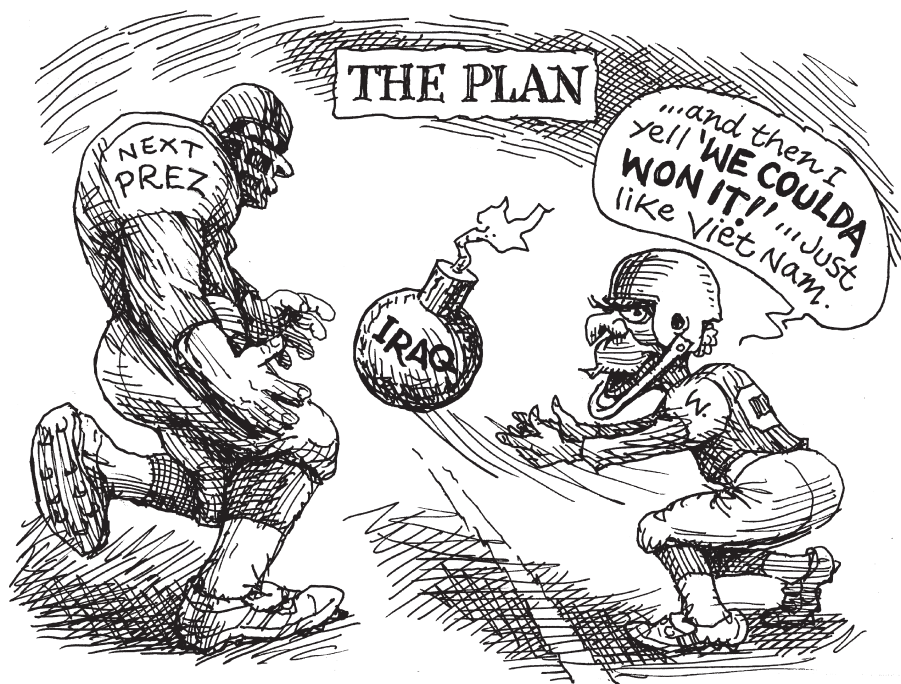
No matter your view of George W. Bush, it is unnerving to see an American president carrying on before the world like a crazy man, speaking emotionally about a place that everyone else knows does not exist but that he wants American troops to occupy for the rest of our lives.

Equally troubling was the president’s bid to resurrect the rhetoric of “good” and “evil” by reading from an e-mail sent by the family of a fallen soldier. There was something very 2002 about this effort to summon the sentiments of that happier time in his presidency. Other catchwords from the era like “cake-walk” and “greeted with flowers” are of course no longer available. But “good” and “evil” may still resonate, though a war in which millions of Iraqis have been killed, wounded, or forced from their homes as a consequence of our actions should make Americans wary of such binary moralism.

[WAR]

## THE CONTRACT ON IRAQ

After a Sept. 16 shootout involving American security contractor Blackwater USA left up to 20 Iraqi civilians dead, the Interior Ministry pulled the firm’s



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operating license and threatened to prosecute those involved. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki says he will not tolerate “the killing of our citizens in cold blood.” The poor puppet seems to think that all those purple fingers actually gave Iraqis permission to run their own country.

Blackwater, which currently has over 1,500 personnel in Iraq, provides armed escorts for American VIPs. The episode in question occurred when a car bomb exploded near a six-vehicle State Department convoy returning to the Green Zone. Insurgents descended, and Blackwater helicopters allegedly fired into the neighborhood. According to the *New York Times*, the company’s security guards on the ground also shot up a nearby car that failed to stop, killing a couple and their infant. Accounts conflict: Blackwater claims that it only fired upon armed insurgents; Iraqi officials maintain that the contractors began shooting and throwing stun grenades to clear the scene.

An investigation is promised, but one thing is certain: after thousands dead and billions spent, we cannot even secure Baghdad.

So Blackwater stays busy—and will likely stay in Iraq. A 2004 American-issued order exempts the contractors from Iraqi law. They work for the U.S.

government, and it needs this private shadow army far more than it needs to maintain the charade of a sovereign Iraq.

[IRAN]

## THE OTHER GENERAL’S REPORT

Breaking the most dangerous of Washington taboos, Gen. John Abizaid says the world could find “a way to live with a nuclear Iran.” Furthermore, war with Tehran would “be devastating for everybody, and we should avoid it to every extent that we can.” The man ought to know. The former head of U.S. Central Command, fluent in Arabic, has more experience in the region than all members of the Congress and Bush Cabinet combined.

Yet even after a disastrous campaign in Iraq, the general’s candid assessment finds no echo among elected officials. The political class still believes war is the preferred solution to any foreign-policy question, rather than a last resort.

The top-tier presidential candidates, Republican and Democrat alike, seem anxious to demonstrate that not only would they bomb Iran—they would bomb it faster than their opponents, with more disregard for innocent life and less concern for international opinion. This hyper-militarism is considered the bare minimum to qualify as a “serious candidate.”

Abizaid told the Center for Strategic and International Studies that there is a basis for hope that Iran will move away from its current anti-Western stance. If the 2008 candidates adopted even a measure of the general's realism, he might be proved right.

[ELECTION]

## TOTALITARIAN TEMPTATION

Say what you will about the now notorious MoveOn ad making a sophomoric pun on General Petraeus's name. It has gotten results—of a sort. The most interesting, if inadvertent, may have been its smoking out of the leadership temperament of leading Republican candidates.

Take John McCain, once a frontrunner, still a darling of the neoconservative wing of the party. He responded by telling a New Hampshire audience that MoveOn “ought to be thrown out of the country.” Of course that was only his initial reaction, and campaign aides rushed to remind him that MoveOn members were citizens with constitutional rights, etc.

McCain may have gotten confused and believed he was running for president of Pakistan or some place where vexatious critics can simply be deported. But probably better that voters find that out now rather than later.

[POLITICS]

## FOREIGN LEGION

Three months after immigration legislation met with a resounding defeat, Sen. Dick Durbin is reviving the amnesty-granting DREAM Act and hitching it to the latest defense appropriations bill. DREAM—Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors—offers citizenship to illegal immigrants serving in the military. Given the public reaction the last time around, it is surprising that any legislator would support a bill with a whiff of amnesty to it.

But imperial-minded lawmakers are now realizing that Iraq occupation duty

is a job not enough Americans will do. A sensible answer might be to recalibrate our foreign policy to accord with the nation's resources. But don't be surprised if Congress chooses a different route, bribing foreigners to fill America's military ranks in a remake of policies that, it has been sarcastically noted, “worked out so well for the Roman Empire.”

[MEDIA]

## PHOTOSYNTHESIS

A picture is worth a thousand words, the saying goes, but millions might not suffice to delve into significance of the two photographs that fortuitously ran on the front page of the Sept. 19 *New York Times*. The top one was unusual enough: a queue of Palestinian school girls in Nablus, 11 or 12 years old, weeping and shielding their eyes in terror as Israeli troops battled with Palestinian militants outside. The most commonly presented image of Palestinians in America is with rock firmly in hand prior to throwing, but these carefully dressed girls look—but for the fear in their faces—as if they might attend parochial school in an American suburb.

On the bottom of the page was an even more arresting photo, one of dozens the Holocaust Museum in Washington recently received from an American World War II veteran who recovered them in a German attic. It depicts guards and staff of Auschwitz at leisure, young German women giggling with an accordionist during the death camp's final year. They illustrate, about as well as anything conceivably could, Hannah Arendt's argument about the banality of evil.

The subject matter of the two photos are deeply and inextricably linked, though it is far from clear the *Times* so intended it. If some future Toynbee wanted to delve into the main themes of our own era, he could find many worse places to begin. ■

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# Sycophant Savior

General Petraeus wins a battle in Washington—if not in Baghdad.

By Andrew J. Bacevich

IN COMMON PARLANCE, the phrase “political general” is an epithet, the inverse of the warrior or frontline soldier. In any serious war, with big issues at stake, to assign command to a political general is to court disaster—so at least most Americans believe. But in fact, at the highest levels, successful command requires a sophisticated grasp of politics. At the summit, war and politics merge and become inextricably intertwined. A general in chief not fully attuned to the latter will not master the former.

George Washington, U.S. Grant, and Dwight D. Eisenhower were all “political generals” in the very best sense of the term. Their claims to immortality rest not on their battlefield exploits—Washington actually won few battles, and Grant achieved his victories through brute force rather than finesse, while Ike hardly qualifies as a field commander at all—but on the skill they demonstrated in translating military power into political advantage. Each of these three genuinely great soldiers possessed a sophisticated appreciation for war’s political dimension.

David Petraeus is a political general. Yet in presenting his recent assessment of the Iraq War and in describing the “way forward,” Petraeus demonstrated that he is a political general of the worst kind—one who indulges in the politics of accommodation that is Washington’s bread and butter but has thereby deferred a far more urgent political imperative, namely, bringing

our military policies into harmony with our political purposes.

From the very beginning of the Iraq War, such harmony has been absent. The war’s military and political aspects have been badly out of synch. (In this regard, the hackneyed comparisons between Iraq and Vietnam are tragically apt.) The failure to plan for an occupation, the wildly inflated expectations of Iraq’s rapid transformation into a liberal democracy, Donald Rumsfeld’s stubborn refusal to acknowledge the insurgency’s existence until long after it had begun, the deeply flawed kick-down-the-door campaign that ensued once Rumsfeld could no longer deny reality: all of these meant that from the outset, the exertions of U.S. troops, however great, tended to be at odds with our stated political intentions. Our actions were counterproductive.

The Petraeus-Crocker hearings found Petraeus in a position to resolve that problem. Over the previous eight months, a discredited president had effectively abdicated responsibility for managing the war. “I trust David Petraeus” became George W. Bush’s mantra, suggesting an astonishing level of presidential deference. Sometime in early 2007, the task of formulating basic strategy for Iraq had effectively migrated from Washington to Baghdad, passing from the office of the commander in chief to the headquarters of the senior field commander. The president made it clear that he intended to take his cues from his general. Military

judgment would inform, even determine, political decisions.

The general has now made his call, and President Bush has endorsed it: the surge having succeeded (so at least we are assured), it will now be curtailed. The war will continue, albeit on a marginally smaller scale. As events develop, it just might become smaller still. Only time will tell.

Petraeus has chosen a middle course, carefully crafted to cause the least amount of consternation among various Washington constituencies he is eager to accommodate. This is the politics of give and take, of horse trading, of putting lipstick on a pig. Ultimately, it is the politics of avoidance.

A political general in the mold of Washington or Grant would have taken a different course, using his moment in the spotlight not to minimize consternation but to stir it up to the maximum extent. He would have capitalized on his status as man of the hour to oblige civilian leaders, both in Congress and in the executive branch, to do what they have not done since the Iraq War began—namely, their jobs. He would have insisted upon the president and the Congress making decisions that wartime summons them—and not military commanders—to make. Instead, Petraeus issued everyone a pass.

\* \* \*

In testifying before House and Senate committees about the current situation in Iraq, Petraeus told no outright lies. He

made no blustery promises about “victory,” a word notably absent from his testimony. The tone of the presentation was sober and measured. It contained the requisite references to complexity and challenge. Petraeus acknowledged miscalculation and disappointment. In contrast to his commander in chief, he did not claim that U.S. troops were “kicking ass.”

Yet the essence of his message was this: after four years of futile blundering, the United States has identified the makings of a successful strategy in Iraq. The new doctrine that Petraeus had devised and implemented—the concept of securing the population and thereby fostering conditions conducive to reconstruction and reconciliation—has produced limited but real progress. This gives Petraeus cause for hope that further efforts along these lines may yet enable the United States to create an Iraq that is stable, unified, and not a haven for terrorists. In so many words, Petraeus told Congress that senior U.S. commanders in Iraq had finally found the right roadmap. The way ahead may be long and difficult—indeed, it will be. But Petraeus and his key subordinates know where they are. They know where they need to go. And above all, at long last, they know how to get there.

Critics have questioned the data that Petraeus offered to substantiate his case. They charge him with relying on dubious statistics, with ignoring facts that he finds inconvenient, and with discovering trends where none exist. They question whether to credit the much-touted progress in Anbar province to American shrewdness or to the vagaries of Iraqi sectarian and tribal politics. They cite the pathetic performance of the corrupt and dysfunctional Iraqi government. They note the disparity between the Petraeus assessment and those offered by the intelligence community, by the Government Accountability Office, and by congressionally

appointed blue-ribbon commissions. They point out that other highly qualified and well-informed senior military officers—notably, Gen. George Casey, the army chief of staff, and Adm. William Fallon, commander of United States Central Command—have publicly expressed views notably at odds with those of General Petraeus.

The critics make a good case. Yet let us ignore them. Let us assume instead that Petraeus genuinely believes that he has broken the code in Iraq and that things are improving. Let’s assume further that he is correct in that assessment.

What then should he have recommended to the Congress and the president? That is, if the commitment of a modest increment of additional forces—the 30,000 troops comprising the surge, now employed in accordance with sound counterinsurgency doctrine—has begun to turn things around, then what should the senior field commander be asking for next?

A single word suffices to answer that question: more. More time. More money. And above all, more troops.

It is one of the oldest principles of generalship: when you find an opportunity, exploit it. Where you gain success, reinforce it. When you have your opponent at a disadvantage, pile on. In a letter to the soldiers serving under his command, released just prior to the congressional hearings, Petraeus asserted that coalition forces had “achieved tactical momentum and wrestled the initiative from our enemies.” Does that reflect his actual view of the situation? If so, then surely the imperative of the moment is to redouble the current level of effort so as to preserve that initiative and to deny the enemy the slightest chance to adjust, adapt, or reconstitute.

Yet Petraeus has chosen to do just the opposite. Based on two or three months of (ostensibly) positive indicators, he has advised the president to ease the

pressure, withdrawing the increment of troops that had (purportedly) enabled the coalition to seize the initiative in the first place.

This defies logic. It’s as if two weeks into the Wilderness Campaign, Grant had counseled Lincoln to reduce the size of the Army of the Potomac. Or as if once Allied forces had established the beachhead at Normandy, Eisenhower had started rotating divisions back state-side to ease the strain on the U.S. Army.

Petraeus likes to portray himself as a thinking soldier. Having devoted his Ph.D. dissertation to the lessons of Vietnam, he qualifies as a serious student of counterinsurgencies. He knows that they require lots of troops—many more than the United States has in Iraq relative to the size of the population there. He knows, too, that they require lots of time—on average, nine or ten years by his own publicly expressed estimation. The counterinsurgency manual that Petraeus helped draft prior to taking up command in Baghdad makes these points explicitly.

If Petraeus actually believes that he can salvage something akin to success in Iraq and if he agrees with President Bush about the consequences of failure—genocidal violence, Iraq becoming a launching pad for terrorist attacks directed against the United States, the Middle East descending into chaos that consumes Israel, the oil-dependent global economy shattered beyond repair, all of this culminating in the emergence of a new Caliphate bent on destroying the West—then surely this moment of (supposed) promise is not a time for scrimping. Rather, now is the time to go all out—to insist upon a maximum effort.

\* \* \*

There is only one plausible explanation for Petraeus’s terminating a surge that has (he says) enabled coalition forces, however tentatively, to gain the upper



hand. That explanation is politics—of the wrong kind.

Given the current situation as Petraeus describes it, an incremental reduction in U.S. troop strength makes sense only in one regard: it serves to placate each of the various Washington constituencies that Petraeus has a political interest in pleasing.

A modest drawdown responds to the concerns of Petraeus's fellow four stars, especially the Joint Chiefs, who view the stress being imposed on U.S. forces as intolerable. Ending the surge provides the Army and the Marine Corps with a modicum of relief.

A modest drawdown also comes as welcome news for moderate Republicans in Congress. Nervously eyeing the forthcoming elections, they have wanted to go before the electorate with something to offer other than being identified with Bush's disastrous war. Now they can point to signs of change—indeed, Petraeus's proposed withdrawal of one brigade before Christmas coincides precisely with a suggestion made just weeks ago by Sen. John Warner, the influential Republican from Virginia.

Although they won't say so openly, a modest drawdown comes as good news to Democrats as well. Accused with considerable justification of having done nothing to end the war since taking control of the Congress in January, they can now point to the drawdown as evidence that they are making headway. As *Newsweek's* Michael Hirsch observed, Petraeus "delivered an early Christmas present" to congressional Democrats.

Above all, a modest drawdown pleases President Bush. It gives him breathing room to continue the conflict in which he has so much invested. It all but guarantees that Iraq will be the principal gift that Bush bestows upon his successor when he leaves office in January 2009. Bush's war will outlive Bush: for reasons difficult to fathom, this has become an

important goal for the president and his dwindling band of loyalists.

Granted, no one is completely happy. Yet neither does anyone go away empty-handed. The Petraeus plan offers a little something for everyone, not least of all for Petraeus himself, who takes back to Baghdad a smidgen of additional time (his next report is not due for another six months), lots more money (at least \$3 billion per week), and assurances that his tenure in command has been extended.

This outcome reflects the handiwork of someone skilled in the ways of Washington. Yet the ultimate result is to allow the contradiction between our military efforts in Iraq and our professed political purposes there to persist.

\* \* \*

Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli is one officer keen to confront rather than ignore that contradiction. In an article appearing in the current issue of the journal *Military Review*, General Chiarelli writes:

The U.S. as a Nation—and indeed most of the U.S. Government—has not gone to war since 9/11. Instead the departments of Defense and State (as much as their modern capabilities allow) and the Central Intelligence Agency are at war while the American people and most the other institutions of national power have largely gone about their normal business.

Chiarelli is correct. His statement goes directly to the heart of the matter. After the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, to sustained bipartisan applause, President Bush committed the United States to an open-ended global war on terror. Having made that fundamental decision, the president and Congress sent American soldiers off to fight that war while urging the American people to distract themselves with other pursuits. The American people have done as they were asked.

The result, six years later, is a massive and growing gap between the resources required to sustain that global war, in Iraq and elsewhere, and the resources actually available to do so. President Bush, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff serving as enablers, has papered over that gap by sending soldiers back for a third or fourth combat tour and, most recently, by extending the length of those tours. In a country with a population that exceeds 300 million, one-half of one percent of our fellow citizens bear the burden of this global war. The other 99.5 percent of us have decided to chill out.

The president has made no serious effort to mobilize the wherewithal that his wars in Iraq and Afghanistan require. The Congress, liberal Democrats voting aye, has made itself complicit in this shameful policy by obligingly appropriating whatever sums of money the president has requested, all, of course, in the name of "supporting the troops."

Petraeus has now given this charade a further lease on life. In effect, he is allowing the president and the Congress to continue dodging the main issue, which comes down to this: if the civilian leadership wants to wage a global war on terror and if that war entails pacifying Iraq, then let's get serious about providing what's needed to complete the mission—starting with lots more soldiers. Rather than curtailing the ostensibly successful surge, Petraeus should broaden and deepen it. That means sending more troops to Iraq, not bringing them home. And that probably implies doubling or tripling the size of the United States Army on a crash basis.

If the civilian leadership is unwilling to provide what's needed, then all of the talk about waging a global war on terror—talk heard not only from the president but from most of those jockeying to replace him—amounts to so much hot air. Critics who think the concept of the global war on terror is fundamentally



flawed will see this as a positive development. Once we recognize the global war on terror for the fraudulent enterprise that it has become, then we can get serious about designing a strategy to address the threat that we actually face, which is not terrorism but violent Islamic radicalism. The antidote to Islamic radicalism, if there is one, won't involve invading and occupying places like Iraq.

This defines Petraeus's failure. Instead of obliging the president and the Congress to confront this fundamental contradiction—are we or are we not at war?—he chose instead to let them off the hook.

Of course, if he had done otherwise—if he had asked, say, to expand the surge by adding yet another 50,000 troops—he would have distressed just about everyone back in Washington. He might have paid a considerable price career-wise. Certainly, he would have angered the JCS, antiwar Democrats, and waffling Republicans who want the war to go away. Even the president, Petraeus's number-one fan, would have been surprised and embarrassed by such a request.

Yet the anger and embarrassment would have been salutary. A great political general doesn't tell his masters what they want to hear. He tells them what they need to hear, thereby nudging them to make decisions that must be made if the nation's interests are to be served. In this instance, Petraeus provided cover for them to evade their responsibilities.

Politically, it qualifies as a brilliant maneuver. The general's relationships with official Washington remain intact. Yet he has broken faith with the soldiers he commands and the Army to which he has devoted his life. He has failed his country. History will not judge him kindly. ■

*Andrew J. Bacevich is professor of history and international relations at Boston University.*

### **There is an American citizen behind recent al-Qaeda propaganda.**

According to intelligence sources, the new Osama bin Laden tape was scripted in major part by Adam Yahiye Gadahn (born Adam Perlman), who has been principally working in the group's propaganda department. Gadahn is under U.S. indictment for treason and is presumed to be located in Waziristan, along the Afghan border, together with other senior al-Qaeda leaders. The tape portrays a heavier bin Laden who, according to photographic analysis, has applied henna dye to his beard. Experts say both voice analysis and a review of the images on the tape by medical experts demonstrate that bin Laden is weak and is suffering from some undetermined illness that might be neurological in nature. The most recent videotape, addressed directly to the American people, is well informed on American politics in general, as a probable result of Adam Gadahn's familiarity with the United States and his ability to monitor the English-language media. Curiously, bin Laden states that if Americans want to know why al-Qaeda is involved in a *jihad* against the West, they should read the works of Mike Scheuer, the former head of the CIA's bin Laden task force.



### **The White House is continuing its campaign to manage public perceptions and increase psychological pressure on Iran.**

The allegedly inadvertent leak of information regarding the Aug. 30 nuclear-cruise-missile-carrying B-52 flight over the U.S. that ended with a landing at Barksdale Air Base in Louisiana was part of what the military calls "perception management." Barksdale is where B-52 flights to the Middle East originate, and the news that nuclear-tipped cruise missiles were transported there is likely to alarm Iran, which fears that tactical nuclear weapons could be used against deep underground and hardened nuclear facilities. The administration's cover story for the B-52 flight, that the weapons were being transported to decommission them, is patently false.



### **Saudi Arabia and Israel, using intermediaries including Prince Bandar bin Abd'al Aziz, have reached a tacit understanding regarding Syria.**

The Saudis, following secret discussions with Vice President Cheney and President Bush, expect Israel to attack Syria some time in the future, probably in conjunction with a U.S. attack on Iran. The Sept. 6 attack by Israeli jets on a site inside Syria was intended to test the new Syrian anti-aircraft radar provided by the Russians, but the Syrians did not co-operate and refused to lock their system on. The Saudis agree with the U.S. objective of striking Iran to delay the development of a nuclear-weapons capability for at least ten years and support the prospect of an Israeli attack on Syria that deters Damascus's goal of establishing Shia domination in Lebanon by arming Hezbollah with more sophisticated weapons supplied by Iran. In recent discussions in Riyadh involving Condoleezza Rice and Robert Gates, the Saudis were astonished to learn that neither American official had been briefed on the intended course of action. This is apparently a result of Vice President Cheney's decision to cut out both the State and Defense Departments from the planning.

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# Surge Protectors

The mixed motives behind the Freedom's Watch ad campaign

By Philip Weiss

LATE THIS SUMMER, just as American political armies were squaring off over the next, and likely last, act of President Bush's Iraq War policy, a new pro-war group called Freedom's Watch announced a \$15-million ad buy over several months in key states. The first ads featured soldiers who had been maimed in Iraq but stood by the cause of a global war on terror. Political observers said they were targeted at the districts of Republican congressmen who were going wobbly on the war.

The rollout was not auspicious. Ari Fleischer, a board member of Freedom's Watch and the former White House spokesman, stumbled on MSNBC's "Hardball" when Mike Barnicle screened one of the ads and asked, "What's that soldier's name?" "I don't have that soldier's name in front of me," Fleischer said. (His name is John Kriesel, and he lost both legs in Fallujah last year). The fact that Fleischer and another member of the group's board had worked in the Bush White House seemed to support the view that that the group was an administration front. Says Moira Mack of Americans Against Escalation in Iraq (which has its own smaller ad campaign): "This is a desperate attempt to counter the strong and growing movement to end the war. We have the public backing of millions of members. They have money and ads, but they don't have public support."

The Jewish press offered a different take. "Pro-Surge Group Is Almost All Jewish," reported the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, the lead wire service for

Jewish news. Four out of five members of the Freedom's Watch board are Jews, and half of its donors are Jewish. The JTA quoted one of its directors, Matthew Brooks, saying this was strictly a "coincidence."

As a progressive Jew, I don't think it is that simple. Right-wing Jewish support has always been a crucial prop for the Iraq War. The neoconservatives, who pushed for the war for years and then got their way after 9/11, originated as a largely Jewish movement that formed in the 1970s in good part out of concern for Israel's security. Many of the neocons cited Saddam's attacks on Israel as a reason for the U.S. to invade Iraq, and similar pro-war arguments spread to liberal Jews. The *New York Times's* Thomas Friedman pointed at Saddam's payments to suicide bombers in Tel Aviv as justification for the invasion, and I remember being shocked when my own brother said he didn't know what to think about the Iraq War. He had demonstrated against the Vietnam War, but his Jewish newspaper said this one would be "good for Israel."

National polls show that Jews opposed the war by a higher percentage than other groups (about 60 percent against), but that opposition was soft. The National Jewish Democratic Council, the body that advocates for Jewish values in the Democratic Party, takes a strong stand in favor of abortion rights, but had no opinion on the Iraq War—its own membership was divided. The Union of Reform Judaism supported the war in 2002 as a "just cause." Three

years later, it changed its mind and in doing so, issued a lament I share, that Jews were largely AWOL from the anti-war movement. The Reform rabbis then called for withdrawal, which prompted an attack by one liberal Jewish writer, who wrote, "A premature withdrawal from Iraq would be devastating to the cause of the Jewish state."

These days, few Jews are making such open statements about a Jewish interest in the Iraq War. The war is a debacle, and even the left-leaning Jewish *Forward* has expressed fear that a populist American movement against the war will blame Jews for it and turn on them. The *Forward* became apprehensive last year when two leading political scientists at the University of Chicago and Harvard published a lengthy paper in the *London Review of Books* that argued that without Israel's friends pushing for the war, it probably wouldn't have happened. Authors John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt have since expanded their argument, publishing a heavily-footnoted book called *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* in September, this time in the U.S. with a leading publisher, Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Freedom's Watch board member Matthew Brooks also directs the Republican Jewish Coalition. (Indeed, the president once hailed him as "Old Matty" during an Israel-related speech.) I asked him whether Freedom's Watch was devoted to Israel's security, and he bridled: "That is absolutely not true. This is a broad-based organization. For anyone to draw any conclusion that we

are focused on Jewish issues is an incorrect assumption and false in reality. ... We are vehemently and strongly focused on making the case for the war on terror as being in America's interest. Israel's interest is totally irrelevant."

In Brooks's favor, Freedom's Watch obviously draws support from gentiles; about half of its donors would appear to have little interest in what is good for Israel. Its ads are straightforward in that respect. The first round said that staying the course will maintain stability in the Middle East (whatever that means), while the second round of print ads listed a handful of countries that had suffered terrorist attacks since 9/11, including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Israel.

Yet like the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, this Jew counts the number of Jews on Freedom's Watch's leadership, and I would say that it is no coincidence that the bitter-enders draw on heavy Jewish support. As Walt and Mearsheimer point out, since 9/11, supporters of Israel have managed to convince themselves and the Bush administration that the United

know that Saddam paid a bounty of \$25,000 to the families of Palestinian homicide bombers."

Bradley Blakeman, the president of Freedom's Watch, who is Jewish and once did scheduling for George Bush, argued on television during the misbegotten Lebanon war last year that Israel "could have wiped out Lebanon in a day if they chose to" but that the Israelis were "fighting with one hand tied behind their back ... according to international law." (Meantime, Blakeman's brother Bruce told the *Forward* that Bush had launched the Iraq War after realizing that Iraq "had designs on attacking Israel.")

During the last presidential campaign, Ari Fleischer told a Jewish audience in Cincinnati that Bush's policies (including the Iraq invasion) had been so good for Israel that even his mother, a Democrat, was thinking of voting for him. Lately, Fleischer cited the Hamas triumph in Gaza as evidence that Arabs don't know how to handle democracy—making it all the more important for the U.S. to stand by Iraq's fledgling parliament.

had befallen them—"The Lebanese allowed this to fester." On the domestic front, Erlbaum has fostered efforts like Jewish camping and Jewish schools so that Jewish kids won't marry non-Jews. He described these efforts to me as "hand to hand combat."

Richard J. Fox also lives in Philadelphia. A real-estate king, he heads the Jewish Policy Center, which the ubiquitous Brooks directs and which opposes the peace process in Israel/Palestine. Its mission statement addresses "foreign policies that impact the Jewish community in the United States" and includes in that category "appeasement of dictators, and unrealistic hopes that dangerous realities in the Middle East might simply change without tougher U.S. policies"—i.e., Israel has no choice but to demolish Arabs' homes.

Then there's Freedom's Watch donor Sheldon Adelson, a casino mogul who is the third-richest man in the United States, per the *Forbes* list. Adelson is cited in *The Israel Lobby* because he gave money to Georgetown University to expand a program in Jewish civilization so as to "moderate the Arab presence at the University," per the superb Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, which often covers political events in the United States better than our press does. The newspaper has also reported that Adelson is married to an Israeli doctor and that he has given a staggering \$60 million to the birthright program, which sends young American Jews on free trips to Israel so that they will identify with the Jewish state (and maybe marry another kid on the bus!). Gentiles need not apply. (Fox, Erlbaum, and Adelson did not return my phone calls.)

It gives me no pleasure to recite these attitudes. They might be no one's concern outside the Jewish community were it not for 9/11 and the war on terror. But since then, a militant response to the Arab world growing out of Israel's expe-

## **FREEDOM'S WATCH OBVIOUSLY DRAWS SUPPORT FROM GENTILES; ABOUT HALF OF ITS DONORS WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE LITTLE INTEREST IN WHAT IS GOOD FOR ISRAEL.**

States is in the same war against terror as Israel is. This conviction has proved disastrous for the U.S., but it draws on a deeply imbedded understanding in the Jewish community of the intransigence of the Arab world.

The three principals of Freedom's Watch have all expressed Israel-centered views. Matt Brooks himself cited Israel's interests two years back when attacking the antiwar movement. Addressing members of the Republican Jewish Coalition, Brooks wrote, "You know, as well as I, that Saddam Hussein launched scud missiles at Israel. ... You

Fleischer is a sophisticated guy, but at least three of his donors have expressed attitudes that strike me as very parochial. Last year I interviewed one of them, Gary Erlbaum, a leader of the Jewish community in Philadelphia, and asked him why American Jews, who were then collecting money to help Israel rebuild, shouldn't give aid to the shattered people of south Lebanon. "Until we take care of our community, absolutely not," he said. "First you take care of your family, then you take care of your community, then you take care of the world." Erlbaum blamed the Lebanese people for what



rience has captured the Jewish community, and—because we are so important in the political process—major segments of American political culture as well. None of the Jews associated with Freedom's Watch seems to have demonstrated any compassion for the Palestinians being brutalized by the Israeli occupation. A couple have dismissed the idea of a Palestinian state.

It is true that liberal Jews like the Union of Reform Judaism are for a Palestinian state. But the URJ also expresses a hardened attitude toward the Arab world—for instance, when it emphasizes Palestinian terrorism as the greatest problem in Israel/Palestine and makes no mention of the horrifying actions of religious settlers, and when it all but rationalizes the confiscation of Palestinian land in the construction of Israel's security fence.

These obdurate attitudes concern me because Jews once led the noble opposition to the Vietnam War. This debacle around, support for Israel has fractured that opposition. Still, I would contend that these attitudes are softening. Jimmy Carter's book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* was read by many open-minded Jews. Walt and Mearsheimer are getting a fair reception in the press, even though they were disinvited from a major foreign-policy forum in Chicago and the *Forward's* editor declined to host a debate on their ideas in New York.

My generation was galvanized by '67 and '73, when Israel seemed to face an "existential" threat. Today, young Jews see an Israel that has been isolated in world opinion, and which litters southern Lebanon with cluster bombs. When even Bush's ambassador to Iraq argues that the solution to terrorism there is "political" equity among the various sects, progressive Jews have to wonder whether Israel's troubles don't have similar roots. Myself, I have pushed for a

Jewish soul-searching to figure out how it is that the neocon ideology gained so much traction in my community.

Not that the leaders of Freedom's Watch want anyone to examine their motivation. "Didn't you invoke Israel's security in 2005?" I asked Matt Brooks—referring to a period when the Republican Jewish Coalition attacked the Union of Reform Judaism for coming out against the war.

"Now you got me, hold on a second," Brooks said, before digging up the full-page ad the RJC ran at that time in support of the war effort. "No!" he crowed triumphantly. "It says we support the president and the war on terrorism. ... There is absolutely zero reference to Israel. It's about stability, it's about making the world a safer place."

Later, though, on the RJC's own website, I found an article the coalition had posted from *The Jewish Week* newspaper during that same brouhaha. This article quoted another RJC ad, apparently from the Jewish press, that *did* mention Israel: "This mission is vital not only for the continuing fight against terrorism, but also for the security of Israel and the stability of the Middle East."

For the last four years, American democracy has suffered from the fact that no one is quite sure just why we invaded Iraq. It would be good for all of us if pro-war Jews were more straightforward about their agenda. ■

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## Slip Sliding Away

The mortgage crisis is only the beginning ...

By James Howard Kunstler

BAD FINANCIAL PAPER, like rust, never sleeps.

The tropical paradise of Hedge Fund Island might seem tranquil for now, but worms are turning in the dumpsters of securitized alphabet debt (MBSs, CDOs, CLOs), and the odor blowing around the world from all this garbage grows stronger by the day in places like New York, London, Tokyo, and Shanghai.

Transfusions of loss-cover loans from the Federal Reserve and other central banks have enabled the Big Fund Boyz to spend the late summer weekends rubbing elbows in the Hamptons with transcendent beings like Diddy and Kelly Ripa. The Boyz gather along the dunes at twilight, bongs in hand, to gaze at Hedge Fund Island, looming offshore in

the gray Atlantic mist, and they notice something alarming: the island, which the BFBs built themselves over the past ten years, seems to be either floating out to sea or perhaps just sinking. In any case, it's getting smaller.

The scores of billions of dollars, euros, and other monies that central banks have recently poured into the sinkhole of losses will only paper over the essential problem for another few weeks, at most. The damage to global structured finance has been done, and there is a widespread, belated recognition that it's not possible to get something for nothing after all. When you hold a lot of paper that represents nothing and put it up for sale, nothing will be offered for it. What a surprise!

Now the task of people with power to act in the finance sector—which itself may be a conceit at this point—is to manage the rapid dissolution of hallucinated wealth in such a way that as few people as possible notice that x-trillions in dollar-denominated pixels have vanished from the hard drives. Sooner or later, though, millions of shlubs dependent on pension checks, annuities, or monthly payouts of one kind or another will notice that something has stopped landing in the mailbox. Repo men with bad haircuts and tattoos will be seen driving other peoples' cars to the auction barn. Young adults accustomed to thrilling paydays will discover that their services are no longer required in the mortgage origination business and will instead have to memorize dozens of excruciating formulas for different sorts of beverages more or less based on coffee. Millions of realtors will enter second childhoods as they move back in with Mommy and Daddy, who themselves must now change their plans, since it is no longer possible to flip the 1962 raised-ranch in Hempstead to buy that condo in Boca Raton.

Reality is biting hard. As with the little marmot caught in the gray wolf's jaws, the body simply surrenders and God's grace of physical shock softens the translation from joyful creature to dead meat. That is where we are at the threshold of autumn, 2007. Digestion follows. The Big Fund Boyz and their minions will end up as mere worm castings in the global compost heaps.

Terrible shocks are going to rip through the socioeconomic fabric of the U.S. as we turn the corner into the darkening quarters of the year. The fiasco of bad debt won't be contained. The choices for those who find themselves financially underwater will be 1.) liquidation, 2.) bankruptcy, or 3.) destroying whatever remains of confidence in the U.S. dollar in order to erase debt by

hyperinflation. People holding power don't like the first two, which translate into Depression (let's make it a capital "D.") When a nation turns into a fire sale from sea to shining sea, and bankrupt citizens don't have enough cash on hand to buy things that have become desperately cheap, well, that's a Depression. Everybody from Fed officials to news editors has lately favored the softer term "recession" because it implies a mere pause in

Bring on Britney and Paris at halftime (Do they have halftime in NASCAR?) and let Justin Timberlake cut their hearts out on the hood of a Dodge Avenger. Believe me, the public will be so deliriously entranced by the spectacle they won't notice anything else going on in the background of our nation.

I pause for breath and apologize for what has been a rather immoderate spewage of mixed metaphors and face-

**YOUNG ADULTS ACCUSTOMED TO THRILLING PAYDAYS WILL INSTEAD HAVE TO MEMORIZE DOZENS OF EXCRUCIATING FORMULAS FOR DIFFERENT SORTS OF BEVERAGES MORE OR LESS BASED ON COFFEE.**

the inexorable march of progress toward economic nirvana. But that's not what we're heading into this time.

There will be so many assets up for sale across the U.S. in the months and years ahead that the very sun in the heavens will take on a K-Mart blue-light-special glow. From houses with miles of granite countertops, to Maybach automobiles, to cabin cruisers that burn 30 gallons of diesel an hour, there will be so much slightly used (or barely "pre-owned") stuff for sale that manufacturing another unit of anything (or importing it) will seem like a sick joke. This leads to a deadly downward spiral of what the realtors have cleverly termed "new pricing."

Of course, that creates a problem for the masses who theoretically support themselves by working to produce new things of value to be bought and sold. But let them watch NASCAR! Let's take whatever little remains of our tax revenues (or bonding ability) and build a dozen more speedway ovals around the country and use up the last remaining six inches of Midwestern topsoil to make ethanol for the race cars and shower the fans with Little Debbie snack cakes as they count the laps.

tious conceits, but the extreme abnormality of events has just got me going.

Let's turn now to what this all means for American society and its prospects. Beyond the murk of financial jargon, the issue will really come down to matters of culture and national character. Are we building a society with a future? Does our culture affirm life or yearn for destruction? Are our daily ceremonies meaningful or empty? Are our dreams consistent with what reality has to offer? Can we look in the mirror and say that we are upright people?

I think we are in trouble. Traveling around the country, you can read it in a thousand things—in the miserable sprawlscape wastelands that have become our everyday environments; in the astounding obesity and ridiculous demeanor of adults lumbering down the airport concourses in oversized nursery-school togs; in the tattoo and piercing craze among people who believe they will never reach a stage in life where others might judge them by their self-mutilations; in the depravity of wealth deployed in Las Vegas, Hollywood, and East Hampton, where anything goes and nothing matters; in the meth-crazed

trailer enclaves of the heartland; in the warrior-culture-as-entertainment confusion of hip-hop gangsterism; in the bottomless cloaca of TV “reality” programming...

Our adventure in Iraq is self-evidently a troubling thing. But what astounds me about our intellectual classes is how they complain about our military presence in the Middle East while they enjoy lifestyles based utterly on supplies of cheap oil imported from the Middle East—and therefore on our continued influence over affairs in that region. Missing entirely is any sense of consequence, and even more particularly of what the overall situation means for our behavior at home. Based on how we live, we got the war we deserve. We’ve run out our string of stunts and tricks in the money rackets. We’ve spent our political legitimacy. The rest of the world will strive mightily to get free of their obligations to us, including their respect for the value of our currency. Events are in control, not personalities.

I doubt we can give up our current behavior without going through a convulsion. The psychology of previous investment is, for us, a force too great to overcome. We’re stuck with the bad choices we’ve been making for half a century to misallocate our resources in an infrastructure for daily life that has no future. Like the addicts we are, we will sell the birthrights of the next three generations in order to avoid changing. We will blame other people who behave differently for the consequences of our own behavior. We will not understand the messages that reality is sending us, and we will drive ourselves crazy in the attempt to avoid hearing them.

The meta-cycle of suburban development, including “housing” and all its accessories in roads and chain stores, is hitting the wall of peak oil. The suburban build-out is over. This will come as an agonizing surprise to many. The fail-

ure to make infinite suburbanization the permanent basis for an economy will rock our society for years to come. Hundreds of thousands of unemployed men with pick-up trucks and panoplies of power tools will feel horribly cheated. I hope they don’t start an extremist political party when the repo men come to take their trucks away.

Even under the best circumstances, with a nationwide change of heart and really wise leadership, America would find it difficult to make the necessary changes that new reality requires. Of course, reality will force us to make these changes whether we’re on board with the program or not. The only variable is how much turmoil may ensue in the process. If we resist doing what reality commands, our trouble is certain to be worse.

What does reality command? Well, first of all—and especially for the benefit of the enviro-progressives I have met recently, who want gold medals for buying hybrid cars—we’d better drop the idea that there is any way whatsoever to preserve our system of happy motoring. The car as a mass-market phenomenon and enabler (dictator, really) of all our daily life arrangements is finished. We’d better find something else to talk about or the American future will amount to little more than a Chinese fire drill on an increasingly unfixable freeway. I am hugely worried that even the intelligent and educated fraction of our society cannot focus on anything but how to keep all the cars running. A failure to drop this, and move on to more practical endeavors, will lead automatically to a failure of reasonable politics. It is already manifest in the abysmal failure of the candidates for president to address the looming oil-import crisis that will certainly be underway as soon as any of them is inaugurated.

Reality commands that we prepare to rebuild our small towns and small cities and downsize our gigantic metroplexes.

Reality commands that we get serious about local food production and local economies. Reality commands that we rebuild the kind of public transit that people will be grateful to travel on. Reality commands that we prepare to restore our harbor facilities for a revival of maritime trade, using ships and boats that do not necessarily run on oil. Reality commands that we put an end to legalized gambling in order for the public to re-learn one of the primary rules of adult life: that we should not expect to get something for nothing.

The trouble we are seeing in the financial sector is largely a result of blowback from tens of millions of people who tried to get something for nothing. It is a circumstance that is now beyond the control of the Bushes, Paulsons, and Bernankes. Their intended-to-be-soothing utterances and actions will not hold back the implosion of cascading defaults and cumulative insolvency. A few poster children may be symbolically rescued to try to prop up confidence in this or that paper, but an awful lot of other people and institutions will just go down because of their own bad choices.

We will see the ruined people and feel bad about them, but we will not be able to undo what they have brought upon themselves. This is how the idea of moral hazard returns to a society that has lost its way. Meanwhile, there is too much to do for the survivors to sit around being crybabies.

Perhaps then we can start by taking all the mental effort we are currently wasting on the subject of cars and how to run them on fuels other than gasoline and focus instead on how to rescue our political institutions so that a truly informed public can reconstruct a bankrupt society into a living and credible republic. ■

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# Is Belgium Breaking Up?

ALL POLITICS ARE LOCAL, said Tip O'Neill. Not so. It is more true to say all politics are tribal. For the 1991 prediction of Arthur Schlesinger—"Ethnic and racial conflict, it now seems evident, will soon replace the conflict of ideologies as the explosive issue of our time"—has proven prophetic.

As Schlesinger was writing, the USSR, a prison house of nations held together by the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, the Red Army, the KGB, and Communist Party, was disintegrating. Out of the carcass came 15 true nations. Causes of secession: ethnicity and culture.

At the same time, Yugoslavia exploded. Slovenes and Croats broke free of Belgrade, and Bosnia was beset by a civil-sectarian war of Croats, Serbs, and Muslims. Macedonia seceded and, more recently, Montenegro. Now Kosovo, cradle of the Orthodox Serb people, but 90 percent Albanian and Muslim, is moving toward independence.

Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the USSR came apart after they became free, thus confirming what my late friend Sam Francis said. Multiracial, multiethnic, multilingual countries are held together either by an authoritarian regime or a dominant ethnocultural core, as the English have held together the United Kingdom, or they come apart.

Today, we see agitation for secession by Scottish nationalists who wish to follow the Irish nationalists of the early 20th century out of the UK, which brings us to the point of this column.

Belgium, created by the European powers in 1831, is the likely next nation in Europe to break up—into a Dutch-speaking Flanders in the north, tied to Holland by language and culture, and a Francophone south, Wallonia, tied to France by language and culture.

What puts the breakup of Belgium on the front burner is that this nation of 10 million has been without a government for three months. In June, Yves Leterme, the leader of the Flemish Christian Democrats, won the general election, but was blocked from forming a government by Wallonia, which fears Leterme is a closet nationalist bent on secession.

Belgium is also divided economically and politically. Flanders is wealthy, conservative, capitalist. Wallonia is poor, socialist, statist. As the Flemish 60 percent of the population generates 70 percent of GDP and 80 percent of all exports, it is weary of seeing its taxes—the top rate is 50 percent—going to sustain a socialist Wallonia where unemployment is 15 percent. By one poll, 43 percent of Flemish want to quit Belgium and go their own way.

What enables Wallonia to block formation of a government is a parliamentary system in which Flanders and Wallonia must each assent to any government, which means that half of the Walloons, 20 percent of the population, holds veto power over any national government.

Not only is the parliamentary situation becoming intolerable to Flanders, there is rage over the recent socialist government's having brought in French-speaking North Africans to give Walloons control of Brussels, which, though in Flanders, has a French-speaking majority.

Heightening the tensions, on Sept. 11, a demonstration was held in Brussels to protest "the Islamization of Europe," featuring a moment of silence for the victims of 9/11. There, as *Washington Times* columnist Diana West describes the videotape, "[W]e see black-clad Belgian policemen brutalizing a man in a light-colored suit and tie. His hands are cuffed behind his back, his right elbow is clasped

in what is known as an arm-bar hold and he is being subjected to a genital hold—a vicious grip that, a retired cop friend of mine tells me, would get any American policeman thrown off the force."

The victim of this brutality was Frank Vanhecke, president of the Flemish secessionist party Vlams Belang and a member of the European Parliament. Also arrested and beaten was Filip Dewinter, the leading politician of Vlams Belang, Belgium's largest opposition party. This is like having Mitch McConnell beaten up and arrested at a rally to protest illegal immigration on the Washington Mall.

Seemingly condoning what was done to the Vlams Belang leaders, Terry Davis, the secretary general of the Council of Europe, issued a statement declaring, "The freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are indeed preconditions for democracy, but they should not be regarded as a license to offend."

Are offensive ideas and speech now verboten in the EU?

While European and U.S. leftists regard Dewinter, Vanhecke, and Vlams Belang as crypto-fascists, as Ms. West writes, it was the police conduct that might better be described as "The New Face of Fascism" in Europe. Moreover, Ms. West and I have met both men and neither was wearing jackboots. What they seek is what many Americans seek—the preservation of their country and their unique national identity.

If a party of small-government immigration reformers and defenders of Europe's unique culture, heritage, and identity can be subjected to such treatment by Belgium police and Europe's elite, we have to ask: has the virus of appeasement—this time of radical Islam—re-entered the European bloodstream? ■

# Fire Fight

Only after America leaves Iraq can the conflagration we started be brought under control.

By Paul W. Schroeder

*[Editor's Note: This is the second installment of a two-part essay. The first, entitled "Open Fire," appeared in our last issue and is available at [www.amconmag.com/2007\\_09\\_24/feature.html](http://www.amconmag.com/2007_09_24/feature.html)]*

THE FIRST HALF OF THIS ESSAY had one central message: the war in Iraq did not *go* wrong, a spectacular military victory spoiled by a botched occupation, but always *was* wrong, a delusional attempt to do the impossible. This recognition is still vital for policy because the U.S. seems bent on continuing its efforts to fix the war, thus missing the remaining opportunity to end it and contain the fire we started.

Odd though it seems that this policy persists despite failures, enormous and growing costs, and major shifts in public opinion and politics since 2004, it is easy to explain. The American consensus on the need for change is fairly wide but not profound and includes no consensus on the kind of change needed. Many divergent proposals compete for attention under the rubric of "getting out of Iraq;" none commands general agreement. Beneath this lack of consensus on how to get out lies a deeper reason for the reluctance to leave: one thing military and political experts, politicians, and the public can agree on is that withdrawing will be difficult and delicate and could have grave adverse consequences.

The risks of withdrawing at this juncture are constantly discussed, usually in

lurid terms—more ethnic cleansing; all-out civil war and total breakup in Iraq; free rein for al-Qaeda and other jihadists; increased Iranian influence; the spread of conflict and civil war to the rest of the region; more homegrown terrorism in Europe; instability and possible overthrow of important governments; loss of access to Middle Eastern oil and/or use of the oil weapon against the West resulting in economic chaos; and finally (the least important and likely but apparently the most feared by Americans), more direct terrorist attacks on the homeland.

Even if the dangers are often overblown, this fear of unintended consequences is natural, though it regularly leads to wrong conclusions and bad policies. The administration insists that the only answer is to fight on till America prevails—a predictable and contemptible argument. Every threat Bush now cites as a reason to stay the course has either been produced by this war or greatly worsened by it. The arsonist still poses as a firefighter. Other common reactions include a kind of paralysis born of indecision over which is the worse evil, staying or withdrawing, and a Micawberish hope that something will turn up.

A word on the current wave of Micawberism, fed by misleading or mendacious reports that the surge is succeeding; the Iraqi government, police, and security forces could still improve; sectarian violence is declining; and so on. This illustrates how hopes derived

from misplaced patriotism and nurtured by clever propaganda can survive unnumbered disappointments, broken promises, and wrong predictions. Gen. David Petraeus, whose views presently command such remarkable credibility, may be an able, honest officer (there are skeptics), but anyone who expects a general handpicked by this president and serving this Defense Department to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the results of the strategy he devised and is responsible for executing is naïve. Petraeus's own record shows this. In October 2004, just in time to influence the presidential election, he published a highly optimistic portrait of progress in Iraq in the national press. It proved totally wrong. As for the statistics on casualties and violence, it requires little knowledge of military history to know that governments, war departments, and military officers always cook the books. The Pentagon has been doing this blatantly throughout the war. Above all, every one knows that this alleged military progress, even if real, cannot be decisive. It rests on a temporary military escalation that cannot be sustained, while the political reconciliation and national unity in Iraq on which durable stability and security depend grow ever more remote.

Less foolish than this Micawberism, but no less futile, are calls for a bipartisan compromise to signal a change in direction, such as Sen. John Warner's

proposal to announce a small reduction of forces before Christmas. This is pure tokenism, meaningless and deceptive. Still more troubling, and most likely to represent the fallback position the U.S. will take, are proposals to avoid the unintended consequences of withdrawal by not really withdrawing but staying on in a different way. The suggestions vary, some recycling ideas already tried without success: changing the mission from combat to training, concentrating troops in a few bases, evacuating most of Iraq but remaining in certain areas, moving most or all of the troops out of Iraq but basing them close by ready to intervene to stop civil war or foreign intervention, and so on. Such proposals appeal to moderates in both parties as a way to criticize the war and claim to change course while still looking strong on security and terrorism (which helps explain why Sens. Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden each espouse one).

The problem is that they are designed not to get the U.S. out of Iraq but to enable it to stay—thus allowing Br'er Rabbit to stop attacking Tar Baby while remaining firmly stuck to it and continuing to present a target for its foes and a stimulus to Islamists and insurgents. If the U.S. cannot put out the fire it ignited or continue to direct the firefighting effort mainly because its very presence in Iraq and the Middle East by now pours oil on the flames, then compromises between all-out occupation and real withdrawal are worse than useless.

It is of course true that a genuine American withdrawal from Iraq will not be easy or risk-free or solve the problems of Iraq and the region by itself. It is equally true and even more crucial that without one, there is no solution. This seems to create an insoluble dilemma. So long as it stays, the U.S. stokes the fire. If it leaves, it runs the risk of having it grow into a holocaust.

There is an answer, theoretically possible under current international conditions. The basic idea is simple and not original: contain the fire by letting it burn itself out within Iraq, at the same time persuading others to limit its spread by their own counter-fires. The inducement for them to do so will be that only this kind of co-operation, even if limited and grudging, will enable the United States to leave, as most other players want it to.

The first presupposition of this strategy, already discussed, is that the U.S. has no real choice. It must face the hard fact that it must leave Iraq and cannot dictate the terms and conditions of doing so. The question is how to put that recognition and the temporary humiliation and loss of prestige involved to some use.

A second assumption is that this necessity gives the U.S. a chance to avoid further losses and achieve some of its ends indirectly by turning withdrawal from a hard necessity into a useful political and diplomatic tool. Though America has important interests in the Middle East, it is not part of the region geographically, culturally, ethnically, or religiously. This is a reason that it can never be the regional hegemon it has tried to be, but it also means that it can leave, abandoning wreckage in its wake, while Iraq's direct neighbors and other countries in adjacent regions cannot. The U.S. can say to other countries (in diplomatic language), "Sorry—the fire may be partly our fault, but it is now your problem. We know it cannot be handled unless we leave—but unless you give us some minimal co-operation, that cannot happen." A firm American determination to leave Iraq and reduce its direct presence in the Middle East thus becomes a way of inducing other states to participate in making possible the kind of orderly American strategic retreat that they, unlike the terrorists, also desire.

Before discussing more specifically how this strategy might work now, a little history. The object is not to demonstrate that policies of strategic retreat, abandonment of untenable positions, and diplomatic judo to turn defeat into victory sometimes work. European history and even the American experience are so rich in examples that the demonstration should be unnecessary. We are now grudgingly following this path with North Korea, and will eventually have to try it with Iran. The aim is to illustrate what can happen to a country that fails to adopt this strategy when it should, and the example chosen is Austria in Italy in 1848-59.

The story is far too complicated to relate here, but the bottom line can be briefly summarized. After emerging successfully from revolutions and attacks in Italy and elsewhere in 1848-49, the Habsburg monarchy's rulers refused to recognize that Austria's hegemonic position in Italy had become untenable, a strategic and political liability. They insisted instead on maintaining its territories and legal position intact, even expanding its military presence in Italy, and finally touched off a war in 1859, when Austria had a chance to win a temporary diplomatic victory. The result was a severe military and political defeat, the loss of Italy, and the way being paved for still worse defeat in Germany in 1866.

The obvious objection is that given the enormous differences between 19th-century Austria and contemporary America and their respective situations, no useful comparison is possible. The point of comparison here, however, is their analyses and strategies—how these two countries understood the problem that confronted them and chose to meet it in certain ways rather than others. Here there are notable parallels. Both governments envisioned themselves as locked, against their will and without their fault, in a long-term,



all-out, zero-sum, life-and-death struggle against ideologically driven foes and forces—global terrorism for the United States, revolutionary democratic nationalism for Austria. Both saw themselves as the special target of these forces and particularly vulnerable to them—the U.S. as leader of the free world with a rich, open society possessing vital interests throughout the world, Austria as a conservative multinational empire in the heart of Europe surrounded by actual and potential foes and forced to defend its historic position and values. Both insisted that their revolutionary enemies and the governments that collaborated with or tolerated them acted not out of ideals or legitimate grievances but greed, nihilistic hatred, and disregard for law and human life. Both insisted that their campaigns were waged for legitimate self-defense and the defense of civilization, peace, and order. Above all, both rejected normal diplomacy, bargaining, and conciliation as worse than useless in dealing with these foes; every concession or retreat would only encourage new demands and more subversion and attacks.

In other words, both took a position basically as rigid and ideologically driven as the one ascribed to their respective enemies. Without going into details, I have to say as an historian that Austria's case against its foes and for its policy was far more reasonable and grounded in evidence than America's today. But that argument has to be left aside. It is irrelevant to the point that Austria committed three crucial strategic errors.

First, it allowed its temporary victories in 1848-49 to blind it to a central, overriding fact clear even before 1848 and glaringly obvious thereafter: control of Italy had ceased to be an asset and become a burden the monarchy could not afford. It could no longer govern its own territories, especially Lombardy, at

any sustainable price or by any internationally acceptable means, and it could not even control the other conservative regimes in Italy it was forced to protect. While most Italians active in politics were not revolutionaries or united in their plans and visions for Italy, they were fairly united and passionate in wanting Austria out; even Austria's conservative friends there and elsewhere in Europe could not openly support it in maintaining the status quo.

Second, Austria's leaders were, for understandable reasons, so convinced that defeat and retreat in Italy would be fatal—pushing the empire down the slippery slope of more nationalist revolutions and foreign challenges leading to destruction—that they convinced themselves that the only answer was victory. They much preferred political victory and tried for it through firm maintenance of Austria's rights and the legal status quo, attempts to suppress revolution and terrorism, and diplomacy to gain Austria allies. But when that failed, military victory became essential, and they convinced themselves that with enough resolve and courage and a little help from friends, Austria could gain it. Thus Austrians came finally to rely on military power and victory to solve their Italian problem, despite grave doubts that victory could be achieved and clear evidence that even another military victory like 1848-49 would only make Austria's position in Italy worse in the long run while weakening it elsewhere.

Third, Austria's refusal to face the hard strategic realities of its situation derived from something more than fear of the consequences of defeat and inability to conceive alternatives. Behind the final resolve in 1859 to take arms against a sea of troubles lay a sense of outraged honor and deep moral conviction—sentiments understandable but self-deceiving and ruinous. For Austrians, retreat in the face of revolutionary conspirators

like Mazzini or treacherous second-class states like Sardinia-Piedmont would indelibly stain the reputation of the dynasty and army and ruin Austria's standing as a great power. Even more important in promoting the fatal strategic miscalculation of 1859 was the role of moral principle and the belief in Austria's moral superiority over its foes. Austria's leaders were convinced that it was defending not just itself but the rights of all of Europe against international outlaws and that every decent government in Europe, understanding this and appreciating their stand, would support them even if it led to war. This moral hubris, the absolute value they assigned to Austria's just cause, closed their minds not merely to political and strategic realities but also to competing moral values and judgments. Many Europeans understood Austria's grievances but placed a higher value on peace, recognized other rights besides historic and legal ones, and understood the necessity and inevitability of change.

The same three strategic errors—a refusal to recognize when a position has become untenable, a reliance on military victory and power to achieve unattainable ends, and moral hubris leading to political and strategic miscalculation—have also brought the U.S. into its current mess in Iraq. It is so much stronger and less threatened than Austria was that its defeat will not be disastrous like Austria's in 1859 or 1866. The main sufferers from the American adventure are Iraq itself and its neighbors. But the long-term consequences will be serious: the further erosion of America's international position, the wasting of irreplaceable assets at home and abroad, the staining of its honor and good name. No one can prove from history that had Austria chosen a more realistic course of strategic retreat in Italy it would have succeeded in saving important assets and making gains at the negotiating

table, though I think this is plausible. Nor can one be sure that similar American efforts would enjoy success today. But one can confidently say for both countries that this represented their only long-range chance and that the one they chose was bound to fail.

Historical comparisons naturally only carry one so far. Why should retreat, indirection, and self-restraint help the U.S. concretely in the Middle East now? First, basic conditions favor it. It is clear that the potential dangers from the spread of war, ethnic-religious conflict, and terrorism beyond Iraq menace its neighbors and adjacent regions more directly and dangerously than they do

standing and authorization for intervening. A major reason that America's appeals to other states in the region to do more to help fight terrorism and pacify Iraq have been ineffective is that the overwhelmingly unpopular American military presence in Iraq negates them. Any actions taken under U.S. control automatically become illegitimate in the eyes of the Arab street and many governments.

Once the U.S. relinquishes control of Iraq or makes clear that that is its real goal, this changes. No one can guarantee that the region's states will co-operate in Iraq or do what we think is needed, but no one can deny their legitimate right to

it possible for the U.S. and its natural partners in the Western world and elsewhere to employ the classical tactic of using one danger to balance another. Again, basic conditions for doing this are present. No government in the region, Shi'ite or Sunni, desires the breakup of Iraq and the instability this would inevitably bring. All fear a triumph of al-Qaeda and Islamic jihadism. If they now promote these evils or fail to work actively against them, it is because they see these dangers as acceptable in order to prevent an American triumph or because they dare not appear to their own people to be knuckling under to the United States. A credible American commitment to real withdrawal both removes those incentives and restores traditional rivalries to be balanced against each other—Turk versus Kurd, Shi'ite versus Sunni, Iranian versus Saudi, Iranian nationalism versus Iraqi—while still permitting general co-operation against the Islamic radicalism that threatens them all.

While historians are better at explaining how a strategy worked in the past than how to implement one in the present, certain measures seem obvious. The essential step is to disavow all the goals and commitments that are not really necessary and possible—a liberal-democratic, pro-American Iraq, a market economy, privatization of the oil industry (a goal still being pursued via the oil revenues bill the Iraqi parliament is being pressured to pass), military bases, a secular and pluralist political system, an open field for American investments, and so on. These are at worst illegitimate goals and at best superfluous ones, and in international politics, nothing is more expensive than the superfluous. This also means accepting that a unified Iraq may be desirable, but is increasingly improbable, and a loose confederation is probably the best achievable outcome. It entails redefining

#### THE DANGERS THAT BUSH AND CO. CLAIM **REQUIRE THE U.S. TO STAY IN IRAQ** COULD PAVE THE WAY FOR GETTING OUT AND INDUCING OTHERS TO HELP FIGHT THEM.

the United States. While Iran now enjoys more security from and influence in Iraq than before, thanks to the American invasion, it would be seriously endangered by all-out civil war in Iraq, with the Shi'ites appealing to Iran for help and the Sunnis calling on other Sunni states and the U.S. to help stop them. Turkey has a similar problem with regard to the Kurds, shared to a degree by Iran and Syria. The immediate dangers of wider unrest and Islamic radicalism for Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the U.A.E., Lebanon, and Jordan need no discussion. Even Israel and Egypt are menaced, along with the wider Arab and Muslim worlds and Europe. The very dangers that Bush and Co. claim require the U.S. to stay in Iraq could, if used wisely, pave the way for getting out and inducing others to help fight them.

Why should one suppose that they will? Because it is in their interest to do so and because, unlike Americans, they possess both the cultural links, ties, and skills to be effective at it and legitimate

intervene in an affair that directly impacts their security and vital interests as Iraq's neighbors. It is maddening to see the Bush administration defy this obvious truth and stand things on their head, proclaiming America's right to fight terrorism in Iraq (making Iraq a living hell) in order to concentrate terrorist attacks away from the American homeland, and insisting that its 160,000 occupation troops are only defending the legitimate order while Iranian diplomats or businessmen in Iraq are "interfering" as spies, provocateurs, and enemy agents. While many Americans are still fooled by this bogus claim to legitimacy, the rest of the world has long since seen through it, and this has important consequences in ruining the United States' image, credibility, and international influence.

Not only will a clear, credible American decision genuinely to leave Iraq and to abandon its effort to control the region eliminate one major obstacle to useful action by others, it will also make

America's vital interests in Iraq to include only what is clearly legitimate and necessary: access to the purchase of oil on the same basis as other countries, a non-threatening Iraqi stance toward Israel, retention of the current international borders, and no overt support or toleration for international terrorism.

Next could come concrete initial steps demonstrating the genuineness of the change in policy. Possible examples include an initial reduction and redeployment of troops, cancellation of the grandiose American fortress-embassy in Baghdad, a commitment not to seek military bases in Iraq, and perhaps a proposal for negotiating neutral status for Iraq under international guarantees. One thing these earnest money payments need not include, and probably should not, is a firm date for total evacuation of Iraq or commitment to a particular mode and schedule for doing so. Both eventually would have to be worked out by negotiation, dependent on certain conditions and performances from the Iraqis and other governments, but the key is to make American withdrawal credible and attractive to all except the terrorists.

What their co-payments should be is a further delicate question. The Iraq Study Group and others have suggested that the U.S. convene an international conference of all the regional powers to coordinate policies and actions to stabilize Iraq. The only trouble is that this seems to assume that the U.S. still enjoys the historically coveted ability to summon such a conference, preside over the deliberations, and largely determine the results. To put it mildly, America no longer commands that position in the international community. It now needs to do what many other states facing similar challenges have done: agree in principle to participate in an international conference under other auspices, perhaps the UN, and to go along with reasonable measures it man-

dates without trying, Bush-fashion, to assert an automatic American right of veto, relying instead on normal instruments of diplomacy and soft power to influence the outcome.

Readers at this point might be asking themselves, "Is this it? The serious answer to the mess in Iraq is to pull out in the hope that it will not blow up and that hostile states like Iran will help us get out more or less unscathed?" The reaction is understandable. The proposal, to repeat, comes with no guarantees of success—only of guaranteed failure if we continue the present course. It is also undeniably vague on just how

tion are plagues all want to avoid. It also assumes something Americans should be embarrassed to admit, but that represents a current asset nevertheless. Though the recent American recklessness and defiance of international law have made the U.S. a problem debtor state in international politics, as it already is in international finance and commerce, in both spheres, it remains too big and important to be allowed to fail completely and go bankrupt—another major reason it may get grudging help even from countries that dislike it. These assumptions are sound enough to act on, but they are obviously not ironclad.

**WHEN RUDOLPH GIULIANI HAS KIND WORDS FOR BARACK OBAMA'S FOREIGN-POLICY IDEAS AND WILLIAM KRISTOL PRAISES HILLARY CLINTON'S POTENTIAL AS COMMANDER IN CHIEF, OPPONENTS OF THE WAR NEED TO WORRY.**

things would work out once it is launched. That is inherent in the nature of international politics and history. What Napoleon said of battles is even more true of diplomacy: "One engages oneself—and then one sees." Moreover, there are hard political costs it exacts that have to be paid up-front while the payoff, if any, can come only in the longer term and will be less visible. Success depends not only on luck and skill but also on certain assumptions—that the governments with whom we must work can stay in control and act rationally to the extent needed, that even opponents like Iran are capable of seeing their own best interests and acting on them, that the U.S., despite its follies, retains many friends (meaning states that share our basic interests regardless of whether they like us or not and recognize that disaster for us would mean great harm for them), and that international terrorism really is a common enemy that unites all governments, and open war and revolu-

In theory, therefore, a strategy like this could succeed. Yet I concede that the proposal is unrealistic, for the simple reason that one cannot envision the U.S., given its political system, leadership, and public, adopting it and carrying it through. The short-term reasons are obvious. Angels speaking from heaven could not make Bush do it, and by the time he leaves office, the opportunity for implementing the strategy may already be lost. Even if the door remains open, and the Democrats win a sweeping victory in 2008, that will not guarantee real change—not when both leading candidates seeking the nomination must prove first of all that they are strong on national security and tough on terrorism. When Rudolph Giuliani has kind words for Barack Obama's foreign-policy ideas and William Kristol praises Hillary Clinton's potential as commander in chief, opponents of the war need to worry.

The problem goes beyond the current and prospective national leadership and



politics, however. It extends even beyond the main constitutional barrier to the needed flexibility in American foreign policy, the virtual impossibility of terminating an obviously failed presidency or changing a disastrous policy during a fixed electoral term, or the related political problem posed by endless electoral campaigns during which the most crucial decisions in foreign policy get put on hold. This is no way to run a railroad, much less the foreign policy of a superpower.

The root of the problem goes deeper still, to the American people's level of political education and maturity and the failure of American institutions, politicians, parties, elites, and the media to elevate it—or even try. If one looks at the list presented earlier of wrong reactions to the current mess and looming danger in Iraq—indecision, Micawberism, wishful thinking, self-deception, and stubborn refusal to face facts and accept consequences—one can find plenty of persons and institutions to blame for actively promoting these follies, but one cannot ignore the general public's role in actively endorsing, participating in, or passively tolerating them. True, this administration and its supporters have misled the public on a massive scale. But they could not have done this for so long had not far too many Americans, possibly a majority, preferred comforting lies to unpleasant truths and acted as co-conspirators in their own deception.

Now many, disappointed with the results, would like to see this administration over and the war ended—without holding themselves accountable, accepting responsibility, or being willing to pay a price. Instead, they look for someone else (the president, Congress, the politicians and parties, the generals, whom-ever) to turn things around and achieve the right results—a different form of the public mindset and outlook dominant in

America from the outset. Both the overwhelming response to Bush's initial actions after 9/11 and the original public approval of the war in Iraq reflected the American public's wish to see its leaders do something bold, decisive, and effective to make Americans safe from their enemies, without the general public's having to make real sacrifices to that end or worry overmuch about the legal and moral rights or wrongs of what was done. The current disapproval of Bush and his policy reflects the same desire for a relatively easy and costless fix combined with a loss of confidence that he can produce it. For evidence, look at who has always paid, is paying, and will in the future pay for this war. The grave human costs are borne by a small unrepresentative minority of the population, the service people and their families; the huge fiscal costs are loaded onto the shoulders of our children and grandchildren; the almost incalculable costs in terms of suffering in Iraq and damage to the international system are widely ignored or dismissed. No sacrifices or risks have been asked from the vast majority of present voting Americans, and this fact arouses no revulsion, widespread protests, or serious calls for change, even from Democrats, because this is apparently the way the American people want it.

What I am suggesting is nothing new or revolutionary; it ought to be obvious and banal. In searching for a different outlook and policy on the Iraq War that could both get America out and help contain the fire it has started or helped spread, we cannot look alone to new leaders and a new administration, which will certainly come, or new party control and political alignments, which seem likely. We also need a changed American public, one that in regard to world affairs is both smarter and better (the two qualities go so closely together in international politics as to be almost indistinguishable)—a public better

informed, more honest and open to the truth, less self-preoccupied and self-centered and therefore able to discern and willing to follow better leadership and make more exertions for better long-range goals.

This is not a hate-America rant by a scholar angered that the American public fails to meet his ivory-tower expectations. Historians are rightly reluctant to explain political developments by such broad categories as “the American character and experience,” preferring to assign more precise and demonstrable causes. Only the conviction in certain cases that these are not sufficient prompts the conclusion that the reigning mindset of particular peoples also makes a crucial difference. I suggest that this applies here—that a serious examination of the sources of our current mess and the possible remedy require a hard look not merely at the policies and actions of the administration and the workings of the American political system but also at the level of political maturity of the American people, especially in regard to foreign policy.

Nor is this a verdict delivered from above by a dispassionate observer confident he has all the answers. It is a painful, disillusioned reflection from someone long convinced that the American public was by and large growing up and changing for the better also in international politics, who now, near the end of his career and life, grows less confident of that progress toward maturity. Worse still, he knows that even if some of his ideas about particular foreign-policy problems are worthwhile, he has no clue what to do about this basic one other than to pen Cassandra cries. ■

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# Mutiny in the Valley

Young immigration reformers in suburban New York challenge a complacent GOP establishment.

**By Michael Brendan Dougherty**

SOUTHEAST, N.Y.—In the Hudson River Valley’s picturesque Putnam County, Republican politicians typically just smile and nod and get elected. Not anymore. The problem isn’t the Democrats—it’s a mutiny in their own party.

The rebellion began last year with a young Air Force veteran, Greg Ball, who upended decades of political legacy to win a New York State Assembly seat by saying what had become unsayable: illegal immigration is illegal.

Now a group of upstarts, inspired and led by Ball, is seizing town office from a shocked Republican establishment, giving the region’s newest state legislator local partners to clean up the village of Brewster. Along the way, these conservatives may provide a model for activists to take the reins of their local parties and solve the immigration crisis in their own backyards. The national party should pay attention, for after taking back their own towns and state government, these rebels have their eyes on Washington.

The village of Brewster, a division of the larger town of Southeast, has become a choice destination for illegal Guatemalan immigrants. Just as the federal government has neglected to enforce immigration laws, so local politicians have ignored violations of labor and housing ordinances. What was once a quaint village, home to many Big Apple commuters, has become a ghetto where landlords exploit immigrants, as immigrants exploit the town’s tolerance.

Signs of decay are everywhere: while the old Cameo theater remains shuttered, an adult video store has opened on Main Street, and a strip club just debuted across from a mom-and-pop supermarket.

Predictably, as longtime residents have abandoned the village, slumlords have come in, packing the town’s new arrivals 15 or 20 to a room, often charging them by the night. MS-13 gang symbols scar Progress Street. Two months ago, immigrants held up Brewster residents with machetes, that gang’s signature weapon. Less reported, though just as troubling, illegal alien on illegal alien crime is skyrocketing. One immigrant was recently drowned. The county sheriff’s department concluded that over 50 percent of all violent crime in Putnam County occurs in the village of Brewster. Local outrage was bound to boil over.

“We reached a breaking point in this community where you just say, ‘Enough is enough,’” explained Matt Neuringer, a 20-year-old student at Fordham University. Neuringer knows something about this indignation. As a campaign manager on Greg Ball’s improbable run for state assemblyman, Neuringer turned popular outrage into votes. “He was the first local politician to broach the subject of illegal immigration,” Neuringer says. The response overwhelmed them. Together, they are rewriting the rules of Hudson Valley politics.

In 2005, Ball, just 29 years old, explored running a primary campaign

against Willis Stephens, a 12-year Republican incumbent assemblyman from New York’s 99th district. Neuringer, then a senior in high school, reached out to him with a poll he had completed as a project for class. “The poll showed that Willis Stephens had a 26-percent name recognition, which is horrible for an incumbent,” Neuringer recounted gleefully. “All the rhetoric—‘Hey Greg Ball, you can’t take out the political machine’—we found out was just a hollow brick.”

Ball brought Neuringer on to his staff and together they canvassed every neighborhood, covering the district in blue and white signs reading “Illegal Immigration is Illegal.” After holding several rallies and printing tens of thousands of pieces of direct mail, Ball rolled over Stephens, with over 70 percent of the vote.

“To get involved in local politics you have two options,” Neuringer explained. “You either kiss the ring of the party bosses and wait 30 years for when they tap you to run, or you challenge them in a primary. That’s what we did.” Now everyone is doing it.

In the year after Ball’s 2006 success, Putnam County’s normally silent primary season is seeing more races than it has in three decades. “I was the first politician in the area to talk about illegal immigration. What is scary now is that there is this bandwagon effect,” Ball says. He welcomes the change. “I believe my candidacy is a movement. It’s

not about a state assemblyman's office. It's about change in the entire region—a voice of the common outrage.”

That movement is now building a political machine. Ball-inspired candidates Mike Rights, Dwight Yee, and Matt Neuringer used the same insurgent strategy and nearly swept through the Sept. 18 primaries. Rights handily won for town supervisor. Yee, a NYC police veteran, garnered more votes than any other candidate in his quest for a council seat. As of this writing, the precocious Neuringer—the longest shot—is within six votes of defeating a popular public-school teacher and the most bankable name in Brewster politics, Roger Gross. Sixty-seven absentee ballots remain to be counted. Even if Neuringer doesn't pull it out, Ball is hopeful that the public's response is transforming the old guard: “In the course of this campaign, Roger has come to the altar on this issue.”

## AS BALL STOKED THE “COMMON OUTRAGE” ON THE STUMP, HIS PROFESSIONALISM ALLAYED FEARS THAT HE WOULD EMBARRASS THE DISTRICT.

But dealing with illegal immigration on a local level can be a dangerous affair. Recently lawmakers in nearby Mamaronck trying to target illegal immigration drew million-dollar civil-rights lawsuits. So what can Ball's men do?

“Our vision is to disincentivize law-breakers in our community,” Neuringer explains. “Those are contractors, those are landlords, those are people who are working without paying taxes. We're going to put together a consumer affairs department in the town of Southeast, in conjunction with the public service commission, to take over where the county left off. We want to make it a miserable experience for a contractor to come to the town of Southeast and hire off the street,” he says. “If somebody pulls into Southeast with commercial

plates, they are pretty much guaranteed to be pulled over and questioned.”

Ball doesn't overpromise. “At the local level this is tough work. It's going to take five to six years or more to create a law-and-order environment that is inhospitable to illegal aliens.” For him, this isn't about color, it's about community: “I want to show a model of how to clean it up. This isn't about race. This is about enforcing the laws. ... If there is someone who is renting illegally and breaking registration laws, I don't care if they are renting to an Irish family or a Guatemalan family—enforce the law.”

On the national level, immigration is discussed in terms of its effect on wages, taxes, crime, and cultural cohesion. In Brewster, residents are concerned with a more immediate issue: day laborers now bathe in Lake Tonetta, a public park for recreation. Citizens have seen their small streets, where chil-

dren once played, become littered with broken roof shingles and empty beer bottles. They have been waiting for the movement Ball wants to spearhead.

But the lesson of Ball's rise in the Hudson Valley is that anger is not enough to win. Certainly he attached his name to one hot-button issue. But he demonstrated the work ethic he would bring to Albany by knocking on over 10,000 doors. He raised more money than any previous assemblyman candidate, he organized over 200 volunteers, and his mailings were well-designed. As Ball stoked the “common outrage” on the stump, his professionalism allayed fears that he would embarrass the district.

And victory comes with its own burdens. Ball and his boys in Southeast won by asking voters to demand more from

their local politicians. The populist fire they fueled could easily be turned on them if they fail to make progress. Ball admits that his entire political career is dependent on revitalizing Brewster—a heavy burden for a freshman legislator in the minority. “It's very important to me to secure my town within my district with people that are like-minded, willing to challenge the status quo and build an organization,” he says. “Once I have Southeast and we clean up the village of Brewster, they aren't going to be able to stop the movement.”

The organization that Ball has created and the allies he has won may propel him into national politics. “It's a question of when, not if,” Ball says. In 2006, anti-war Democrat and folk singer John Hall took the area's U.S. congressional seat from Sue Kelly, whose RINO reputation combined with an unpopular war to depress turnout in heavily Republican Southeast.

If Ball can build a reputation as someone who fixed an immigration crisis in Brewster, he sees himself as part of a comeback for the GOP at large. “We can win national elections, we can win back our majorities. The issue of illegal immigration is an important issue for people on both sides of the aisle—especially labor unions, the blue-collar guys, the Reagan Democrats we lost. We can pull them back on these bread-and-butter issues. Illegal immigration is the issue of our time.”

Perhaps the only thing preventing Ball from charging into Washington in 2008 is the record of the Bush administration on immigration and the war. “He's gutting our party,” Ball says. For now, he's focused on capturing the local GOP structure. Whether he waits until 2010 or jumps in next year to bid for a seat in the House, the assemblyman is undaunted. It wouldn't be the first time he's run against the record of his own party's bosses—and won. ■

# War Whisperers

The 2008 hopefuls promised a change in foreign policy then hired the old guard.

By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos

IT MAY SURPRISE NO ONE that former deputy secretary of defense and ousted World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz still enjoys the red-carpet treatment among Washington's elite. That he indulged in it at the screening of an HBO documentary about 10 wounded Iraq War veterans who barely made it home alive from the conflict Wolfowitz helped to engineer might raise an eyebrow.

Yet he was singled out as a VIP at the Sept. 5 premier of "Alive Day Memories: Home from Iraq" and was still smiling after the screening, which featured insurgent footage of IED attacks, severed limbs, shredded brains, and left hardly a dry eye in the place. Organizers discreetly overlooked Wolfowitz's marquee role in justifying the invasion that brought them all together.

The continued deference to former administration officials extends to the very lifeblood of the city right now—the presidential election, where neoconservative war boosters still enjoy A-list invites, give and get tons of money, and have the ear of top-tier GOP candidates. Meanwhile, old and new Democratic hawks have largely pushed anti-war liberals to the margins of the establishment, creating think tanks with muscular names and erudite journals to catapult their colleagues into top-level jobs in a new Democratic administration.

Despite the declining appetite for war among regular Americans, the message is clear: when it comes to shaping future foreign policy for either party, hawks and internationalists are in, doves and realists are out.

"My view is, if you want a shift in strategy, you aren't going to get it from these people, who are just hungry for a job in the next administration," observed one Beltway policy wonk. Any conceivable Democratic White House, he noted, would smell a lot like the status quo. Reappearing would be a phalanx of Clinton I protagonists with names like Albright, Holbrooke, Lake, and Berger, followed by a lesser-known generation of liberal interventionists like Peter Beinart, Lee Feinstein, Martin Indyk, and Anne-Marie Slaughter.

They inhabit a growing galaxy of politically ambitious Democrats, most of whom have been careful to criticize President Bush's war in Iraq on mostly tactical points, for hubris and unilateralism, but not his doctrine of regional democratization and preemptive intervention.

It is not so far from their own humble beginnings, after all. Most of the Democratic policy advisers today cut their teeth in the Clinton administration, where they oversaw a disastrous military-humanitarian mission in Somalia, approved strategic strikes and sanctions on Iraq, believed Saddam Hussein was amassing weapons of mass destruction, and ultimately supported his ouster.

But it was in the 1994 NATO bombing of Serbia and the subsequent Dayton Peace Accords that Team Clinton found its foreign-policy mojo.

Richard Holbrooke, today a key adviser to Hillary Clinton, has called the Balkans a huge show of strength and moral authority. "There will be other Bosnias in our lives," the former assis-

tant secretary of state declared in his 1998 memoir, *To End a War*, about the peace accords he helped broker, "areas where early outside involvement can be decisive and American leadership will be required. ... The world will look to Washington for more than rhetoric the next time we face a challenge to peace."

Anthony Lake, Clinton's national security adviser during the Balkan war, said in a 1993 speech, "We have the blessing of living in the world's most powerful and respected nation at a time when the world is embracing our ideals as never before. We can let it slip away. Or we can mobilize our nation in order to enlarge democracy, enlarge markets and enlarge our future." He's now a top adviser in the Obama campaign.

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, considered a close adviser of Mrs. Clinton, was right there with them. In his memoir *An American Journey*, Colin Powell recalled how, in 1993, he urged the newly-minted Clinton team not to bomb Bosnia too hastily. According to Powell, Albright countered exasperatedly, "what's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?"

"I thought I would have an aneurysm," wrote Powell, whose similar protests on the road to Iraq would earn him a slow isolation from the Bush inner circle a decade later.

Nonetheless, Holbrooke, Albright, Lake, and former National Security Adviser Sandy Berger are "first spear" centurions leading a larger army of Clintonites—now with wife Hillary or chief



rival Barack Obama—seeking to advance the goals they nurtured in the 1990s. Nearly all were in support of the 2003 invasion of Iraq or discreet about their reservations. Nearly all have re-emerged this campaign season with a renewed belief in Wilsonian international engagement, a continued presence in Iraq, and a hawkish stance on the Middle East.

In Hillary's camp, Jim Steinberg, former Clinton deputy national security adviser and Brookings Institute fellow, joins Martin Indyk, who served as a special assistant for Middle East affairs on the Clinton National Security Council after eight years at the pro-Israel Washington Institute for Near East Policy and several years at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Indyk heads Brookings' Saban Center for Middle East Policy, which is funded by Israeli-American media mogul Haim Saban. The center also employs Kenneth Pollack, another booster of the 2003 invasion who has been linked to Sen. Clinton, and analyst Michael O'Hanlon, who confirms that he supports her. Center fellow and former Clinton official Bruce Riedel has reportedly been advising the Obama camp.

Lee Feinstein, a Council on Foreign Relations director and former Clintonite, fits right in with Hillary's campaign. In April 2003, he told CNN that he was confident "U.S. forces over time will find weapons of mass destruction and also find evidence of programs to build weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq, even though it was becoming increasingly clear they would not.

More recently, Feinstein has been aligned with a bustling coterie of what one writer called "hot policy wonks for the Democrats," expounding on the virtues of democracy building and intervention, particularly to stop genocide in places like Darfur. To this end, Feinstein teamed up in 2004 with Anne-Marie Slaughter, dean of the Woodrow Wilson

School at Princeton University and another oft-mentioned future White House official, to write "A Duty to Prevent" for *Foreign Affairs*, the lede of which extols, "The international community has a duty to prevent security disasters as well as humanitarian ones—even at the price of violating sovereignty."

Slaughter is ambitious, though it isn't yet clear which camp she supports. Her résumé is long and prestigious; her work a year ago with G. John Ikenberry on the Princeton Project on National Security generated buzz that continues today. Their final report, "Forging a World of Liberty Under Law," outlines a "liberal international order" for ultimate peace and security worldwide.

If the United Nations cannot be reformed to give determined democracies real authority to intervene in countries in crisis, they argue, then an alternative world body should be established that would. At some point, according to the writers, such a confederation might include a military arm "to confront their mutual security challenges."

Peter Beinart, who insists he is not advising anyone, has reportedly inspired the top-tier candidates with his recipe for a liberal return to muscular global democracy in *The Good Fight: Why Liberals—and Only Liberals—Can Win the War on Terror and Make America Great Again*. At what *The Hotline* called a "smashingly well-attended book party at the home of Nancy Jacobson and [Hillary for President pollster] Mark Penn," both Clintons were on hand to praise him.

Hillary also spoke at the August launch of a new think tank of centrist Democrats and a smattering of Republicans called the Center for a New American Security founded by former Clinton defense officials Michele Flournoy and Kurt Campbell. (The ironic similarity in name to the neoconservative Project for the New American Century has not been lost.)

The group, which includes Derek Chollet, a key adviser to the John Edwards campaign, supports a long-term, albeit smaller, U.S. presence in Iraq, but insists that future foreign interventions shouldn't be curtailed because of Iraq's failures.

To be fair, Obama's team has reached out to more of a mixed crowd, engaging former Clintonites Susan Rice, an African expert at Brookings, and Washington lawyer Mark Brzezinski. Obama also snagged the endorsement of Brzezinski's father, Carter National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Lawrence Korb, a former assistant secretary of defense, is also working with Obama. He is one of many from the Center for American Progress—headed by former Clinton deputy chief of staff and Hillary supporter John Podesta—working with the top tier. Korb has championed a redeployment plan for U.S. troops and recently co-authored an op-ed for the *Boston Globe* entitled "How to withdraw quickly and safely."

While Hillary has been courting military brass—most notably Ret. Gen. Jack Keane, who co-wrote the current surge strategy with Frederick Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute—Obama has reportedly sought advice from Ret. Gen. Powell.

"I think the neoconservatives have certainly been discredited," Korb insisted to TAC. "I think that's what we're coming back to—getting rid of extremes."

That said, no less than eight names associated with the Clinton and Obama campaigns—including Indyk, Steinberg, and O'Hanlon—have turned up, in some cases multiple times, on statements and letters authored by the Project for the New American Century, the brainchild of neoconservatives Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan, launched to "accept responsibility for America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity and our principles."

Republican candidate and frontrunner Rudy Giuliani not only believes in the Bush doctrine, he pumped it up with steroids in the September/October issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Beginning with, “we are all members of the 9/11 generation,” and ending with “only principled strength can lead to a realistic peace,” the 6,000-word manifesto has the prints of his predominantly neoconservative team all over it.

Led by former Reagan aide and Hoover Institution fellow Charles Hill, there is Harvard Professor Martin Kramer, who works with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Peter Berkowitz of Hoover; Kim Holmes of the Heritage Foundation; Stephen Rosen of Harvard; Enders Wimbush of the Hudson Institute; *Commentary* eminence Norman Podhoretz; and the newest addition, author Daniel Pipes, who has been waging an online war against American “Islamofascist” college professors.

Giuliani, who recently said he is not averse to using tactical nuclear weapons against Iran, has no doubt found his muse in Podhoretz. Upon releasing his latest opus, *World War IV*, Podhoretz predicted in a *National Review Online* Q&A that his toddler granddaughters will be in their 30s by the time the global war on Islamofascism is won and that “confusion” over the real mission in Iraq may detract from George W. Bush’s legacy, which will ultimately be that of “a great president.”

He compared Giuliani to Reagan, said Americans who did not support his World War IV construct were living in fear-induced denial, and did not back off earlier claims that ongoing violence in Iraq is just a symptom of its nascent democracy.

While supporting the mission of global American hegemony, Martin Kramer makes it clear that not all nations, particularly Muslim ones, are destined for the “advance of human free-

dom” Bush described to a joint session of Congress in 2001. Admitting his ideas clash with the president’s, Kramer has publicly explained that undemocratic regimes that nevertheless ensure security, avert war, and combat terrorism should be left alone.

At an AEI-sponsored event in June, Kramer explained his brand of neorealism as an Arab-regime thing: “any attempt to promote democracy, far from making things better, might make [conditions] worse,” for broader U.S. and Israeli interests in the region.

Kramer did not name the regimes in question, but his new Giuliani colleague Berkowitz did in a column for the Israeli-based *Ha’aretz* newspaper in 2005, pointing to West-friendly Jordan, Kuwait, and Egypt. One might as well throw in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, which are now considered Petri dishes of Islamic revolution because of what Kramer appraisingly called “consensual authoritarianism.”

Canvassing the campaigns, it is hard to find a conservative of any other stripe advising the top tiers, indicating that like Wolfowitz’s continued celebrity, neo-conservatism is far from being upstaged.

Earlier reports indicated that old Bush I realists like Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger, who before the Iraq invasion said he was “scared to death that the Richard Perles and Wolfowitzes of this world are arguing that we can do [Iraq] in a cakewalk,” had the ear of Sen. John McCain. They were to be outnumbered, however, squeezed in with hawks like James Woolsey, Max Boot, Henry Kissinger, and Robert Kagan—all of whom made pre-war prognostications that were more eerily off the mark.

“This isn’t surprising,” Fred Barnes, editor of the *Weekly Standard*, told the *Washington Times* in August. “This is where the national security expertise

and wisdom is among Republican conservatives.”

Meanwhile, Mitt Romney—who has also said he would go nuclear on Iran—has engaged J. Cofer Black, who led the CIA operations in Afghanistan and is vice chairman of the controversial Blackwater USA, a security contractor in Iraq that has recently been banned from the country.

Reportedly, Romney is also consulting with Dan Senor, the former mouthpiece for the Coalition Provisional Authority in post-invasion Iraq. In his exposé of the occupation, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Life in Iraq’s Green Zone*, Rajiv Chandrasekaran described Senor as “viceroy” of L. Paul Bremer’s inner circle. Senor, he wrote, “never conceded a mistake, and his efforts to spin failures into successes sometimes reached the point of absurdity.”

Fred Thompson has, so far, a more ideologically varied staff, but a common Bushian thread is evident. There is Mary Matalin, Dick Cheney’s media henchwoman; Liz Cheney, Bush State Department official and daughter of the vice president; former Energy Secretary Spence Abraham; and Rich Galen, who served in Iraq as an occupation devotee and spin doctor.

“In Washington, nothing succeeds more than failure,” declares Ted Carpenter, defense policy expert for the CATO Institute. “How else do you explain it?”

Some insiders try. Big donors influence campaigns and endow think tanks that breed advisers candidates want. “Outside the box” thinking is not only seen as limp cache in this self-sustaining scene, but it’s openly despised by an establishment that quickly closes ranks when it feels threatened. The big loser? The American public, which will find few alternatives at the voting booth and a future as certain as the recent past. ■

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# This Bloody Honor

It was the pivotal moment of the latest New Hampshire debate. Mike Huckabee and Ron Paul locked horns over the future of Iraq policy and the obligations of the

United States to Iraq, each one drawing cheers of support from the audience. While leading candidates John McCain and Mitt Romney bickered over the real or merely “apparent” efficacy of the surge and Fred Thompson was on the other side of the country gabbing with Jay Leno, Huckabee and Paul were setting the terms of the debate.

One view was sentimental and nationalistic, the other realistic and prudent. Huckabee made many viscerally satisfying statements about honor and unity, while Paul proposed strategic thinking and insisted on the accountability of government to the people. Nothing better demonstrated the vacuity of the leading Republican candidates or the bankruptcy of the pro-war position than those few minutes of lively argument between two “second-tier” candidates for the nomination of a predominantly pro-war party.

Replying to Paul’s earlier call for withdrawal, Huckabee issued the challenge: “Congressman, whether or not we should have gone to Iraq is a discussion for historians, but we’re there. We bought it because we broke it. We’ve got a responsibility to the honor of this country and the honor of every man and woman who has served in Iraq and our military to not leave them with anything less than the honor they deserve.” Congressman Paul refused to endorse America’s collective responsibility: “The American people didn’t go in. A few people advising this administration, a small number of people called the neo-

conservatives, hijacked our foreign policy. They are responsible, not the American people.” Despite the deep, intense divisions that the war has opened up in this country, Huckabee replied, channeling Barack Obama, “Congressman, we are one nation. We can’t be divided. We have to be one nation under God. That means if we make a mistake, we make it as a single country, the United States of America, not the divided states of America.”

Embarking on reckless, destructive, and divisive policies and then appealing for national solidarity when things go wrong is hardly unique to Republican supporters of the current war, but it is telling of how bereft of ideas pro-war Republicans have become that they are reduced to demanding the unthinking consent of dissenters and laying the blame for the debacle at the feet of those who have most vehemently opposed it from the start. Persuasion has long since departed from standard Republican rhetoric, replaced by moral blackmail and the frequent insinuation that to oppose the war is to do the bidding of bin Laden. Add to this now Huckabee’s implicit charge that to cease our tragic involvement in Iraq is to dishonor the nation and the military. It has apparently not occurred to him that we do the greatest honor to our country by pursuing its vital interests, which do not include propping up sectarians in Baghdad, and we show honor to the military by respecting the Constitution its members have sworn to defend.

So Huckabee has wrapped the war the administration sold with deception and exaggeration in the noble dressing of national honor. There was no mention of whether it was honorable to attack another country without just cause nor whether there was honor in dishonoring the limits set down by the Constitution on the war powers of the president. As he would have it, we do American soldiers honor by perpetuating a ruinous policy that sacrifices their lives in an unnecessary war. We honor America by continuing to drag her good name and reputation through the mud, subjecting our country to the opprobrium of the world and losing the respect of nations that have long been our allies. As he sees it, the honor that our soldiers have already earned with their service is somehow contingent on our continued support for a mission that is breaking the Armed Forces to which those soldiers have dedicated themselves.

Earlier in the debate, one of the FoxNews reporters attacked Congressman Paul, asking rhetorically if he wanted to take marching orders from al-Qaeda, to which Paul replied sharply, “No! I’m saying we should take our marching orders from our Constitution.” Indeed, respecting the Constitution and the requirements and limits it sets down is the greatest honor that we can show our country as citizens. We should be united in our zeal for republican government, not in solidarity behind an illegal war launched arbitrarily by the executive. What we owe the Iraqis is the justice that some of our leaders have denied them for so many years—the justice that comes from our minding our own business and leaving Iraq’s affairs to Iraqis. ■

# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*Eastern Promises*]

### From Russia, Without Love

By Steve Sailer

"EASTERN PROMISES" is a violent, sentimental, and efficient Russian immigrant mob movie with an overpowering star performance from Viggo Mortensen as Hollywood's favorite kind of hero, the dangerous man with a heart of gold. He plays the new chauffeur of a London-based Russian mafia family trafficking in sex slaves from the Old Country.

Veteran art house goremeister David Cronenberg considerably telegraphs each grotesque throat-slitting far enough in advance that I could close my eyes until it was over, except for one naked knife fight in a Turkish bath that must have gone on even longer than the similar scene in "Borat."

Cronenberg's most popular film with the public was 1986's "The Fly," with Jeff Goldblum as a mad scientist sprouting bristly black fur due to an experiment gone terribly wrong. In contrast, critics adored Cronenberg's 2005 action movie with the pretentious title, "A History of Violence." Cronenberg cast as the small-town nice guy who isn't whom he seems the half-Danish Mortensen, along with the über-WASP William Hurt (a step-grandson of Henry and Clare Booth Luce) as his Philadelphia mafioso brother who pulls him back in. (Exactly which Philly crime family was left

vague: perhaps the notorious Anglo-Scandinavian Main Line Mob?)

The implausible casting was a nudge to rapturous critics to over-interpret this dopey little shoot-'em-up not as a normal gangster flick but as a profound anti-Bush allegory about the unspeakable violence that underlies American history etc. etc.

Unfortunately, "A History of Violence" seemed perpetually a bit off, as if Cronenberg had never been to a small town. I saw it at a \$3 theater and the low-budget Saturday night crowd gave it the raspberry, hooting at its phony twists.

Cronenberg's latest crime-family thriller collaboration with Mortensen, "Eastern Promises," is a sizable improvement. It might be almost as preposterous as "A History of Violence," but its less familiar setting amidst Russians in London makes it easier to enjoy than Cronenberg's clankingly inept vision of Middle America.

"Eastern Promises" raises politically incorrect questions about why we would want so many newcomers that immigrant mafias become inevitable. Cronenberg explained his opposition to immigrants failing to assimilate to the *New York Times*: "At its worst, it's you come and you live there, but you live in a little ghetto of your own culture that you brought with you. I suppose that's happening in the States with the Spanish language. Can multiculturalism really work?"

"Eastern Promises" asks whether the West needs, in particular, quite so many foreign pimps to lure naïve blonde adolescents here from Eastern Europe with promises of singing jobs, only to rape them, hook them on heroin, and enslave them in brothels. (Steve Knight's script is so hostile to the immigrant criminals that he makes Putin's secret policemen the good guys.)

Mortensen possesses what Cronenberg calls "very Russian cheekbones," and he has the "flathead" look of a post-Soviet goon down perfectly. In truth, Mortensen exudes so much star power that he overwhelms his role as a nobody who recently showed up in London from somewhere vague in the Urals. Luckily, the supposedly wily old crime lord never wonders why this confident, competent, and commanding 40-something man with an air of innate nobility needs an entry-level job.

Meanwhile, the supporting plot line, with Naomi Watts as a nice English midwife, makes only symbolic sense as a metaphor for the Hobbesian decay spread by immigration. When a comatose 14-year-old Russian prostitute dies delivering her baby, the midwife pockets her diary, hoping to deduce who the baby's grandparents are. (Apparently, perhaps due to National Health budget cuts, the job of legally identifying unknown babies has been delegated to random hospital staffers to have a go at in their spare time.) Displaying formidable powers of bad judgment, she asks a courtly Russian restaurant owner, who happens to be the godfather pimp himself, to translate it.

When she realizes who her translator is—and that he knows she knows—instead of calling Scotland Yard for protection, she arranges a meeting with his chauffeur, bringing along her aged uncle and mum as bodyguards. Evidently, in the spirit of the "vibrant" globalized London—O brave new world!—she's forgotten that boring old England spent 800 years developing rule of law so that the English wouldn't have to form their own family mafias for protection from other mafias. ■

Rated a very hard R



## BOOKS

[*A Tragic Legacy: How a Good vs. Evil Mentality Destroyed the Bush Presidency*, Glenn Greenwald, Crown, 303 pages]

# Rose Garden of Good and Evil

By Tom Piatak

THE BOURBONS were famously said to have learned nothing and to have forgotten nothing. In *A Tragic Legacy: How a Good vs. Evil Mentality Destroyed the Bush Presidency*, Glenn Greenwald makes a persuasive case for applying the same description to the Bush administration. Greenwald ably chronicles its pervasive incompetence and stupidity—and the object on which most of that incompetence and stupidity has been lavished, the needless war in Iraq. Proving that it has indeed learned nothing and forgotten nothing, Greenwald demonstrates that the administration is seeking to magnify the disaster in Iraq by pushing for war with the country that may well have been the major beneficiary of our invasion, Iran. Overall, he offers some genuine insights into the sorry state of contemporary American politics.

The author notes that the drive to attack Iraq began long before Sept. 11. Bush's motivations for signing on to this adventure are not entirely clear, but probably stemmed, at least in part, from a desire to avenge Saddam Hussein's defiance of his father and reported attempt to assassinate him, just as Bush's desire to seek the presidency in 2000 was related to his wish to avenge Bill Clinton's victory over the elder Bush in 1992. Whatever his motivations, Sept. 11 was critical to Bush's success in convincing Americans to join his vendetta against Hussein, with 70 percent of Americans telling pollsters in September

2003 that they believed Hussein was directly involved in the terrorist attacks and countless millions clinging to that belief today, despite a complete lack of evidence.

The Bush administration is trying to use the same sort of sleight of hand to generate support for war with Iran, making much of its associations with terrorist organizations. But, as Greenwald notes, the groups Iran supports are Hamas and Hezbollah, both of which are focused on attacking Israel, not the United States. He argues forcefully that hostility to Israel should not, by itself, be grounds for war with Iran: "If there are valid arguments for deeming Israel's enemies to be enemies of the U.S., then they should be made explicitly and clearly, without the type of misleading obfuscation that President Bush and his supporters clearly intend to create by implying that Iran supports anti-U.S. terrorist groups." And it can also be noted (although Greenwald does not) that since Iran poses a far graver threat to Israel than the United States, Israel can reasonably be expected to use its regional military superiority to deal with it.

Reagan, virtually none has shown any willingness to emulate him and confront this corrupt system—or even to leave Washington after making it to the Promised Land.

Bush is certainly no Reaganite. As Greenwald documents, Bush has "presided over massive increases in domestic spending, the conversion of a multibillion dollar surplus into an even larger deficit, the creation of vast new bureaucratic fiefdoms, [and] an unprecedented expansion of the powers of the federal government." That Bush is no conservative was obvious long before he steamrolled his way to the GOP nomination in 2000 on the basis of little more than his name and an unprecedented amount of corporate contributions. Yet as Greenwald ably chronicles, the "mainstream conservative" movement did little more than act as a cheerleader for Bush during most of his tenure.

Indeed, Greenwald has done us all a favor by dredging up some fine examples of neoconservative fawning over Bush, quoting David Frum gushing that Bush is "one of the most decisive, successful, and ... popular leaders of our

ATTEMPTS BY THE *NATIONAL REVIEW* CROWD TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM BUSH STEM FROM HIS UNPOPULARITY, NOT ANY COMMITMENT TO PRINCIPLE.

As Greenwald observes, the Bush administration could not have succeeded in convincing many Americans that Saddam Hussein was "another Hitler" without the complicity of the media: "our country's most influential media outlets turned into little more than glorified megaphones for amplifying government claims." He rightly places the blame for this on the cozy relationships among the members of the overclass in our imperial capital: "the most powerful political officials in Washington and the most influential media stars are part of the same system and nearly all are abundant beneficiaries of it." Despite the lip service all Republican politicians now pay to Ronald

time" and John Podhoretz burbling that Bush is the "best presidential speaker since Franklin Delano Roosevelt" and the invasion of Iraq is "the gift George W. Bush has given the world." Bush has changed remarkably little during his presidency, and recent attempts by the *National Review* crowd to distance themselves from Bush stem entirely from his unpopularity, not any commitment to principle. As Greenwald archly observes of the neocons' attempt to drop their effusions over Bush down the memory hole, "in this regard, these self-proclaimed great devotees of conservative principles have revealed themselves to have none."

Unfortunately, there is little price to pay among politicians or pundits for being spectacularly wrong. Greenwald recounts a debate over Iraq on CNN between Scott Ritter, Jonah Goldberg of *National Review*, and Peter Beinart of *The New Republic*. In contrast to Ritter, neither Goldberg nor Beinart had “any experience with the military, the weapons inspection process, or Iraq.” Ritter turns out to have been right, and his opponents “profoundly wrong.” But this “means nothing,” since Ritter’s reward has been continued obscurity and vilification, while Goldberg and Beinart have been compensated for their ignorance and folly with columns in the *Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post* and *Time* respectively.

Despite the many insights Greenwald offers, his attempt to place the blame for Bush’s problems on his Manichean worldview is not entirely convincing. As Steve Sailer noted long ago, Bush is a man who makes up his mind quickly, on the basis of little information, and then never changes it. Such inflexibility has little to do with Bush’s belief that our enemies are “evil.”

Still less successful is Greenwald’s attempt to blame Bush’s worldview on his faith. To make this case, Greenwald would need to show us that Bush was prudent and pragmatic before his conversion to evangelical Protestantism and only became reckless and inflexible afterward. He doesn’t. Indeed, Greenwald notes, “Pre- and post- conversion, Bush’s place in the world was clear, right, secure, unquestioned, and unquestionable. And in both phases, there was little space or tolerance for those who opposed or contradicted him.” The misguided evangelical support for Bush highlights the wisdom of Luther’s quip that it is better to be ruled by a wise Turk than a foolish Christian, but the political creed to which Bush was converted, and the one that has been responsible for the disaster in Iraq, is neoconservatism, not evangelical Christianity.

It is noteworthy that Greenwald, a man of the Left, has chosen to excoriate

Bush for his “Good vs. Evil Mentality.” Traditionally, American liberals have praised those leaders who have made policy decisions based on a desire to destroy evil and who have not been swayed by the costs of such policies, no matter how great. Furthermore, the virtues of prudence and realism Greenwald wishes Bush possessed have been associated with the Right. Consider this well-known passage:

Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash be paid with another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said ‘the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’

George W. Bush has never uttered anything as Manichean as this, but Abraham Lincoln is perhaps our most honored president. Leftist criticism of his refusal to compromise with the South is nonexistent, even though the Civil War cost 600,000 American lives (roughly the equivalent of 6 million dead today), and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address was a pledge to let countless thousands more perish rather than negotiate a peace with the South.

Other American leaders revered by the Left correspond to this pattern as well. Woodrow Wilson went to war “to make the world safe for democracy” and detected unalloyed evil in such unlikely places as Wilhelmine Germany and Habsburg Austria. FDR adamantly refused to accept anything less than unconditional surrender from Germany or Japan, a decision that very likely prolonged World War II and resulted in more American deaths. All of these leaders have been criticized for the price paid to achieve their goals, but that criticism has come almost exclusively from the Right.

It is not a surprise, though, that Bush has tried to use similar (though far less eloquent) words to advance the war in Iraq and the war on terror. The heroes of American liberals are the heroes of Bush’s neoconservative tutors as well. Bush has spoken forthrightly of his desire to emulate Lincoln and FDR as leaders in war, and his own Second Inaugural was stunningly Wilsonian. To be sure, Greenwald’s criticism of Bush does not cause him to echo earlier conservative criticisms of any of these iconic figures. But his desire to have a foreign policy rooted in American interests rather than morality does represent a departure from traditional ideological divisions.

Greenwald does get to the heart of the problem of the Bush presidency when he writes, “The strength of a superpower resides in its ability to distinguish between serious and unserious threats.” The problem with George W. Bush is not that he describes our enemies as “evil”—they are—or that, like the Blues Brothers, he thinks he is on a mission from God. It’s that he has mistaken a rag-tag group of murderous criminals and an assortment of Third World backwaters for an existential threat to a nation that spends half of what the whole world does on defense.

As John Mueller pointed out in *Foreign Affairs*, “it is worth remembering that the total number of people killed since 9/11 by al Qaeda or al Qaeda like operatives outside of Afghanistan and Iraq is not much higher than the number who drown in bathtubs in the United States in a single year, and that the lifetime chance of an American being killed by international terrorism is about one in 80,000—about the same chance of being killed by a comet or meteor.” The greatest threat Islam actually poses to the West is through mass immigration, and it is that real threat that Bush, by his embrace of multiculturalism and open borders, has done everything in his power to increase. ■

*Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.*

[*The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature*, Steven Pinker, Viking, 484 pages]

## Speaking Your Mind

By John Derbyshire

BACK IN 1854, English mathematician George Boole published a book entitled *An Investigation of the Laws of Thought*. The objects of his inquiry, Boole tells us, were “the fundamental laws of those operations of the mind by which reasoning is performed.” He sought to mathematize those laws and hoped, incidentally, to gather “some probable intimations concerning the nature and constitution of the human mind.” Looking back on Boole’s work a half-century later, Bertrand Russell sniffed, “If his book had really contained the laws of thought, it was curious that no-one should ever have thought in such a way before.”

What Boole in fact succeeded in doing was creating symbolic logic, a branch of applied mathematics—the algebraization of deductive reasoning. True, there’s much more to thought than just deductive reasoning, so Russell had a point. Still, the idea that our thoughts obey their own laws and that those laws can be worked out and expressed mathematically, like the laws of physics, is very appealing. It is more appealing now than ever before, as experimental neuroscience, fortified by new techniques for brain imaging and new understandings of the human genome (which has a construction template for the brain, as for every other organ), allows us to treat thought as a physiological process, like digestion, and observe it taking place and speculate about its evolutionary history.

Since we use language to express our thoughts, one obvious way to investigate the “laws of thought” is by studying language. This is Steven Pinker’s

approach in his new book, *The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature*. Pinker reminds us, though, that this commonsensical point of view is controversial. Twentieth-century behavioral psychologists came close to asserting that thought does not exist and that only language, along with other forms of observable behavior, is worthy of study. Their spirit was carried forward by linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, who in 1956 famously hypothesized that the “laws of thought” are different for speakers of different languages. So pervasive were these ideas, Pinker tells us, that while writing this book, he had to stop telling people it was about “language and thought” because they all assumed it would be about how language shapes thought—“the only relation between the two that occurred to them.”

Modern psycholinguistic theories can in fact be laid out in a spectrum. At the left end of the spectrum (using “left” here with Orwell’s Newspeak in mind) is Linguistic Determinism, the idea that if thoughts exist at all, they are entirely at the mercy of language. I don’t think anyone believes the precisely opposite thing, that language has no influence on thinking at all, but Pinker’s “conceptual semantics” is well to the right of center on the spectrum.

In *The Stuff of Thought*, he gives over a whole chapter to refuting three different current language-drives-thought theories: Extreme Nativism (nothing to do with immigration, Nativism is a term of art in cognitive science, referring to innate mental structures), Radical Pragmatism, and Linguistic Determinism. None of these can be fairly summarized in a sentence or two. Suffice it to say, Pinker is properly respectful of serious intellectual opponents, but succeeds in showing that each of these three theories has loaded onto a single true idea more weight than it can bear. At the end of this chapter—the most difficult but most rewarding in the book—Pinker nails his own theses to the church door. The parentheses are my own.

Word meanings can vary across languages [the true idea overloaded by Linguistic Determinism] because children assemble and fine-tune them from more elementary concepts. They can be precise [Extreme Nativism] because the concepts zero in on some aspects of reality and slough off the rest. And they can support our reasoning because they represent lawful aspects of reality—space, time, causality, objects, intentions, and logic—rather than the system of noises that developed in a community to allow them to communicate [Radical Pragmatics]. Conceptual semantics [Pinker’s own outlook] fits, too, with our common-sense notion that words are not the same as thoughts, and indeed, that much of human wisdom consists of not mistaking one for the other.

What, then, does language tell us about the “laws of thought”? In Pinker’s account—what he calls “a word’s-eye view of human nature”—language tells us that, in the first place, we build our thinking from a modest inventory of fundamental concepts like “events,” “states,” “things,” “changing,” “having,” “containing,” and “causing”; and in the second place, that we apply and extend these fundamental concepts via metaphor, analogy, allusion, and allegory in wonderfully imaginative ways. Here, for instance, is the Pinkerian reduction of a very famous sentence:

Some people are hanging beneath some other people, connected by cords. As stuff flows by, something forces the lower people to cut the cords and stand beside the upper people, which is what the rules require. They see some onlookers, and clear away the onlookers’ view of what forced them to do the cutting.

That is the opening sentence of the United States Declaration of Independence (“When in the course of human events...”) with its metaphors stripped

down to their roots. Something has of course been lost in the reduction, but it is instructive to see the basic mental concepts lurking beneath the surface of those proud, familiar words.

That our thinking depends on mental models of space, time, substance, and causality would not have been news to Kant or Aristotle. The pleasure of Pinker's book is in watching the careful skill with which he peels back the linguistic layers that clothe those models. The whole performance brought to my mind (very Pinkerishly, I now see) those elaborate colored diagrams in anatomy textbooks, in which you can leaf through successive transparencies to remove the skin, musculature, and organs to reveal at last the skeleton.

Kant and Aristotle both get several mentions in *The Stuff of Thought*, registering the fact that it is hard to discuss these topics without trespassing into metaphysics. The essential quality of thought is that it is about something. Some thoughts—the ones Boole was interested in, for example—are about

other thoughts. The rest, though, are about things and persons in the external world, or as much as we can know of that world through our senses. "Reality," as a great novelist observed, is one of the few words that mean nothing without quotes. The idea of the world as illusion, or at any rate of our knowledge of it as irredeemably imperfect, informs all philosophy and religion. In the West, this idea found its canonical articulation in Plato's allegory of the cave, with our impressions of the world as flickering shadows on the cave's wall.

Pinker puts this image at the center of his closing chapter, "Escaping the Cave," but as a starting point for a much more expansive view of human mental capability. We are not, he says, prisoners of some pre-set menu of thinkable thoughts. We can enlarge our understanding by the psycholinguistic tricks he has been describing—by dreaming up new metaphors and analogies. Our natural mental inclination regarding number, for example, is "one, two, many," yet we can educate children to manipulate numbers like 54,201. We can even, in higher mathematics, say nontrivial things about infinite numbers.

Likewise in our social thinking:

In the governance of institutions, openness and accountability can be reinforced by reminding people that the intuitions of truth they rely on in their private lives—their defense against being cheated or misinformed or deluded—also apply in the larger social arena. These reminders can militate against our natural inclinations towards taboo, polite consensus, and submission to authority.

I am a great fan of Pinker's work, and I enjoyed this new book very much. Like his others, it breathes the spirit of good-natured, rational, humane inquiry. A few commentators—our own Steve Sailer, for instance—have criticized Pinker in the past for being excessively diplomatic about human group differences. But surely a scholar who has said in public that yes, men and women have

different innate capabilities, and yes, Ashkenazi Jews have higher mean intelligence than the rest of us, and no, parenting styles have little effect on the maturation of personality, and a great many other things very shocking to the PC sensibility of our time, is paying his dues. In any case, the only part of this new book likely to bring a blush to the cheek of a Chief Diversity Officer is one titled "The Seven Words You Can't Say on Television," which is about swearing and taboo speech. If teenage boys still frequent bookstores, this chapter will be the best-thumbed one in shelf copies.

Also, like Pinker's previous books, this one is filled with small linguistic delights—jokes, puns, paradoxes, and even a scattering of familiar comic strips to illustrate some of the author's points. I learned some words, too: "momentaneous," for instance, to describe an event, like the swatting of a fly, that, while it occupies some measurable amount of time in the real—sorry, "real"—world, can be treated by language as instantaneous. Though I think my favorite is "whimperative"—the excessively diffident way of getting someone to do something, as in, "I was wondering if you might pass the salt."

The author explains in his introduction that *The Stuff of Thought* is intended as the third volume in a trilogy about language and mind (that is, following Pinker's 1994 *The Language Instinct* and 1999 *Words and Rules*), and at the same time as the third in another trilogy about human nature (following his 1997 *How the Mind Works* and 2002 *The Blank Slate*). This book is intended, in other words, as a sort of capstone on an inverted-V structure of previous works. If this means that Steven Pinker is done with writing books for lay readers about linguistics and cognitive science, I take it as very bad news. ■

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[*Fathers and Sons: The Autobiography of a Family, Alexander Waugh, Nan A. Talese, 472 pages*]

## The Waugh at Home

By Daniel McCarthy

*They f-k you up, your mum and dad.  
They may not mean to, but they do.  
They fill you with faults they had,  
And add some extra, just for you.*  
—Philip Larkin, “This Be the Verse”

AUBERON WAUGH came home Easter Sunday 1966 to find a policeman waiting for him. His father, the great novelist Evelyn Waugh, had died. That came as a relief—Auberon at first feared something had happened to his children. He made his way to his father’s house. By the time he got there, the body was gone but not his father’s last remains. “On arrival,” Auberon later recalled, “I found a small pile of excrement on the carpet outside the downstairs lavatory” where Evelyn died. “Others must have noticed it too, but, being Waughs, they all pretended not to have done so until the daily help arrived, when it vanished without anything being said.”

Other Waughs kept their peace; Auberon put the story in his autobiography. His son Alexander always wondered why he did it. To dump on his father’s memory? To show the clan’s indifference to “dung, death and other worldly horrors”? In *Fathers and Sons: The Autobiography of a Family*, Alexander speculates that his father appreciated the symbolism of Evelyn’s death—that it came on Easter, appropriate for a devout Catholic, and that he left behind something obscene, befitting a comic novelist.

Whatever the case, this episode—and a half dozen like it involving deaths, weddings, wars, and bananas—illustrates the ambiguous relations between the Waugh fathers and sons. Alexander

revered his father, but he was the exception: Evelyn resented his father for the favoritism he showed his other son, Alec; Auberon, for his part, warmed up to Evelyn in adulthood, but earlier they were not close. Evelyn did not hide his feeling that his children were bores—“Of children as of procreation,” he wrote Nancy Mitford, “the pleasure is momentary, the posture ridiculous, the expense damnable.”

Four generations of Waugh boys—from Evelyn’s father Arthur, born 1866, to Alexander, born 1963—have grown up to be writers. Between them, Arthur’s descendants—daughters, too—have produced 180 books of all kinds: biographies, novels, journalism, poetry, even treatises entitled *Time and God*. The last two are among Alexander’s previous works: warm-ups for tackling the Waughs, one might say.

Alexander begins with the last of the nonliterary Waugh patriarchs, his great-great-grandfather and namesake Alexander, known to posterity as “the Brute.” (The author claims he was not named after the Brute but an earlier Alexander, “the Great and Good,” first of the English Waughs. The family name itself is of Scottish origin, and good evidence suggests it is the singular of Wales.) The Brute read the Bible, Shakespeare, and *Wisden’s Cricketing Almanac*, but not much else. His old-fashioned ideas of child rearing involved sticking son Arthur high up in a tree and firing off a shotgun near his ears to cure his nerves. Arthur, a boy of his time, was dutifully eager to please his father, but the only interests they shared were cricket and amateur theatricals.

Arthur turned out to have a literary streak: at Oxford he won the Newdigate Prize—past winners included John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and Oscar Wilde—for “Gordon in Africa,” a poem celebrating the British general decapitated at Khartoum. The poem impressed the Brute. Four years later, Arthur published a life of Alfred Lord Tennyson and was on his way to minor fame as a biographer of eminent Victorians. He fondly wished to be one himself, affecting

Dickensian mannerisms and an outmoded style of dress that would later grate on his younger son, Evelyn.

It took a while for Arthur to catch on to that; his attention was fixed on his elder son, Alec. Reacting against the hard ways of the Brute, Arthur doted on Alec—“the son of my soul,” he called him—and when Alec was kicked out of boarding school for homosexual activity, Arthur was crestfallen but stood by his boy. In disgrace and out of school, the only path open to Alec was His Majesty’s army, then fighting the First World War.

Alec wanted to enlist; like other young men, he expected the war to be short and glorious. He was soon disabused. “What is there fine and noble in young men carrying boxes up the line, suddenly hearing a shell and dropping everything and falling flat in a ditch?” he wrote home, “Knight and Jackson were two of the best fellows you could meet—blown to bits.” His disgust came out in a poem called “Cannon-Fodder.” The title was a concession to his shocked father—originally, it had been called “Carrion.” It told of vermin eating away at the leftovers of some mother’s son, a young man mourned at home but unburied where he fell, “uncared for in the unowned place / that you fought so hard to keep.”

Alec wrote his first novel as a 17-year-old soldier before leaving for France. *The Loom of Youth* was an autobiographical account of boarding school life, including the bits that had got him in trouble. It was a *succès de scandale*. Later novels and nonfiction would often be as scandalous but rarely so successful, although one, 1955’s *Island in the Sun*, about interracial adultery on Grenada, was a hit in America and spawned a film, a song by Harry Belafonte, and even the name of Island Records. By then Alec had long since discovered his heterosexual side. The war, or at least the French brothels, helped straighten him out, and he became a prodigious womanizer. By the time Evelyn went to Oxford, he was calling his chrome-domed brother “the

Bald-Headed Lecher,” not without admiration.

What Evelyn did not admire was the way their father treasured Alec. But all that paternal esteem, as Alexander shows, did not make Alec a better father himself: after missing his children's early years due to World War II, Alec nonetheless continued to travel, picking up mistresses wherever he went. Though he loved his children, he rarely saw them. Evelyn, who thought himself “lacking in love” from his parents, played a larger role in the lives of his own six children, however reluctantly.

Not only Arthur's favoritism but his theatricality—expressed in hammy performances whilst reading aloud—and his sentimentality repulsed Evelyn, who whetted an already sharp wit against his

so that every child in the land could have one banana. But the Waugh children never got theirs—Evelyn took all three of their bananas and devoured them himself. “It would be absurd to say that I never forgave him,” Auberon wrote, “but he was permanently marked down in my estimation from that moment.”

Alexander defends his grandfather: Auberon, he points out, had behaved as badly not long before when he stuffed his trousers with jam tarts while the household was distracted in greeting Evelyn, just back from military duty. Auberon, his son says, “like Evelyn, could not control his greed.” A fair point—except that Auberon was about 5 when he stole the tarts. Evelyn was in his early 40s when he hogged the bananas.

**“THE MOST TERRIFYING ASPECT OF EVELYN WAUGH AS A PARENT,” ACCORDING TO AUBERON, “WAS THAT HE RESERVED THE RIGHT NOT JUST TO DENY AFFECTION TO HIS CHILDREN BUT TO ADVERTISE AN ACUTE AND UNQUALIFIED DISLIKE OF THEM.”**

hard contempt for those qualities. Arthur is much abused in Evelyn's stories, as characters based upon him die violent deaths. One is decapitated by a mad carpenter, a vocation Evelyn had once tried. The titular “Man who Liked Dickens” is a sadistic lunatic who forces a victim to spend his life reading Dickens to him aloud. Evelyn even lampooned his father's apparent fetish for young ladies on bicycles. Alexander likes to exculpate Evelyn, but readers of *Fathers and Sons* might rather agree with Evelyn's Oxford friend who said that where Arthur was concerned, Evelyn was more sinning than sinned against.

How far short of an ideal father Evelyn himself fell might be gauged by an episode Auberon recalled in his autobiography. Bananas were a great rarity in England during the Second World War. Auberon and his siblings had never tasted one. At the war's end, the British government, which maintained banana rationing through 1954, issued coupons

“The most terrifying aspect of Evelyn Waugh as a parent,” according to Auberon, “was that he reserved the right not just to deny affection to his children but to advertise an acute and unqualified dislike of them.” The terror dissipated as Auberon grew older, though their relationship still had its hiccoughs. In Cyprus for a stint of mandatory national service, Auberon accidentally shot himself with a turret-mounted machine gun. He lost ribs, a lung, a finger, and his spleen, but survived. His mother flew from England to be by his side. His father stayed home and did not write. Auberon did not hold this against him; while in the hospital fearing for his life, he wrote a note to be sent to Evelyn in the event of his death. “Dear Papa,” it began, “Just a line to tell you what for some reason I was never able to show you in my lifetime, that I admire, revere and love you more than any other man in the world.”

(For his part, Evelyn also eventually came to appreciate Arthur—by emulat-

ing him. Alexander notes that after Arthur's death, Evelyn became a more sentimental writer himself and started dressing more like a fuddy-duddy)

Auberon recovered. He tried his hand at novels for a while, but really made his mark in journalism, particularly with the satirical diary he wrote for *Private Eye*, a work some critics, V.S. Naipaul and A.N. Wilson among them, rank alongside or above his father's *oeuvre*. Satire might be too hygienic a word for the diaries, which are really a collection of uproarious lies about public figures, giving play to Auberon's anarchist streak—a trait he shared with his father. Geoffrey Wheatcroft has aptly applied to Auberon what Auberon once wrote of Evelyn: both were unconventional libertarians, “far closer to the Manchester School anarchists than to the Conservative right wing.” Auberon inherited some of that from his mother's side, too: his ancestor and namesake Auberon Herbert was a 19th-century individualist anarchist.

Auberon's public philosophy was of a piece with his personal conduct. “I was seldom if ever disciplined by him,” Alexander remembers. “He believed that good manners were taught by example and could never be learned from orders and instructions, or from any system of contrived or spontaneous punishment.” The tempests that punctuated the filial relations of earlier Waughs did not trouble Alexander and his father. That makes the last section of *Fathers and Sons* the least interesting. But then, what could an admiring son say about a man whom even Britain's gutter press—which Auberon mercilessly lambasted in his lifetime—hailed as a saint?

*Fathers and Sons*, taken as a whole, is comment enough. “I suppose,” Alexander muses, “that all of us Waughs only became writers to impress our fathers.” *Time* had already impressed Auberon before he died in 2001. There is every reason to think this book would have impressed him even more. ■

*Daniel McCarthy is senior editor of ISI Books.*

# It's Not the Freedom, Stupid

A frequent theme nowadays is “Why do they hate us?” meaning why does so much of the world dislike the United States. The reasons given are usually absurd:

they hate our freedom and democracy. Actually the reason is simple if unpalatable. They hate us because we meddle and have meddled.

People remember slights. They may not remember them as they actually happened, but they remember them. The Civil War ended in 1865, the federal occupation in 1877. Yet today many Southerners are bitter, to the point that their emotional loyalty is to the South, not to Washington.

Silly? Yes, if you are from the North. Grievances matter more to those aggrieved than to the aggrievers.

In Guadalajara, near my home in Mexico, a towering monument in a traffic circle honors *Los Niños Héroes*, the Heroic Children. These are the little boys who, when the invading American Armies attacked Chapultepec in 1847, went out to fight for their country. Avenues are named *Niños Héroes* all over Mexico. Few Americans even know that there was a war.

Wounds to national pride gall people and endure. Exactly why, I don't know, but it happens. Consider China. How many Americans have heard of the Opium Wars of 1839 and 1856? Or understand that the United States and the European powers occupied such parts of China as they chose, forced opium sales on China, imposed extraterritoriality, and bloodily suppressed the Boxers? How many people have even heard of the Boxers?

Over a billion Chinese.

My point is not that China is morally superior to the United States. It isn't. But if you want to understand why so many

countries detest us, you have to understand how they see us. Whether you agree is irrelevant. Nor does it matter whether their grievances are factual. For example, many South Americans believe their countries to be poor because of exploitation by America. This isn't true, which doesn't matter at all.

A few years back, I was in Laos and chatted with a young Lao woman. She mentioned in passing the death of her father. “What happened to him?” I asked. “Oh,” she said, “he died fighting the Americans.” A war that many Americans saw as a meritorious crusade against communism was, to the countries involved, an inexplicable attack that killed their fathers and brothers and children. They didn't see why the internal affairs of their country were America's business.

Agree with them or don't, but that's why they hate us.

Living in Mexico, knowing how other countries react, watching our foreign policy, I cringe. The first rule of hemispheric diplomacy should be “Don't get into Latin faces unless you have to.” The U.S. has a long history, of which most Americans aren't aware, of meddling to the south. Two invasions of Mexico, at least one of Panama, the installation of Pinochet in Chile and of various Central American dictators, United Fruit, the Bay of Pigs, on and on and on. These things are remembered.

A couple of examples. First: many decades back, Mexico had a comic-book character called Memín Pinguín, a caricature black kid with exaggerated lips and so on who had adventures with white

friends. In 2005, Mexico issued postage stamps with Memín's picture. To Mexicans, it was innocent nostalgia. Yet in America, outrage erupted. Jesse Jackson attacked the Mexican government and George Bush denounced the stamps as racist. People here were furious: Mexico couldn't even issue postage stamps without approval from Washington.

Second: in 2006, some Cuban businessmen took a room in the Sheraton in Mexico City. Washington got wind of it and forced Sheraton, an American company, to eject them. Childish and pointless, it enraged Mexicans who see Cuba as yet another small country being bullied by the U.S. and regarded the ejection as meddling with national sovereignty. The effect, of course, was to fan sympathy for Cuba.

Why does this happen? Americans obviously are not stupid people. Dummies don't build Mars rovers. Yet we seem to have a wanton, almost genetic non-grasp of how others think—which means that we can't predict what they will do. Often Americans just don't care what others think. This of course plays into the hands of Hugo Chavez and bin Laden.

Further, we tend to see things through lenses of moralistic abstractions: democracy is good and freedom is good, and therefore if we bomb Iraq and kill many thousands of soldiers who are husbands, brothers, children, and fathers, they will throw flowers and turn into fifth-century Athens. It doesn't work that way.

People detest condescension. And we lecture Russia and China condescendingly on human rights and speak openly of committing “regime change” in various countries as if we had a divine right to determine their form of government.

That's why they hate us. We meddle. ■



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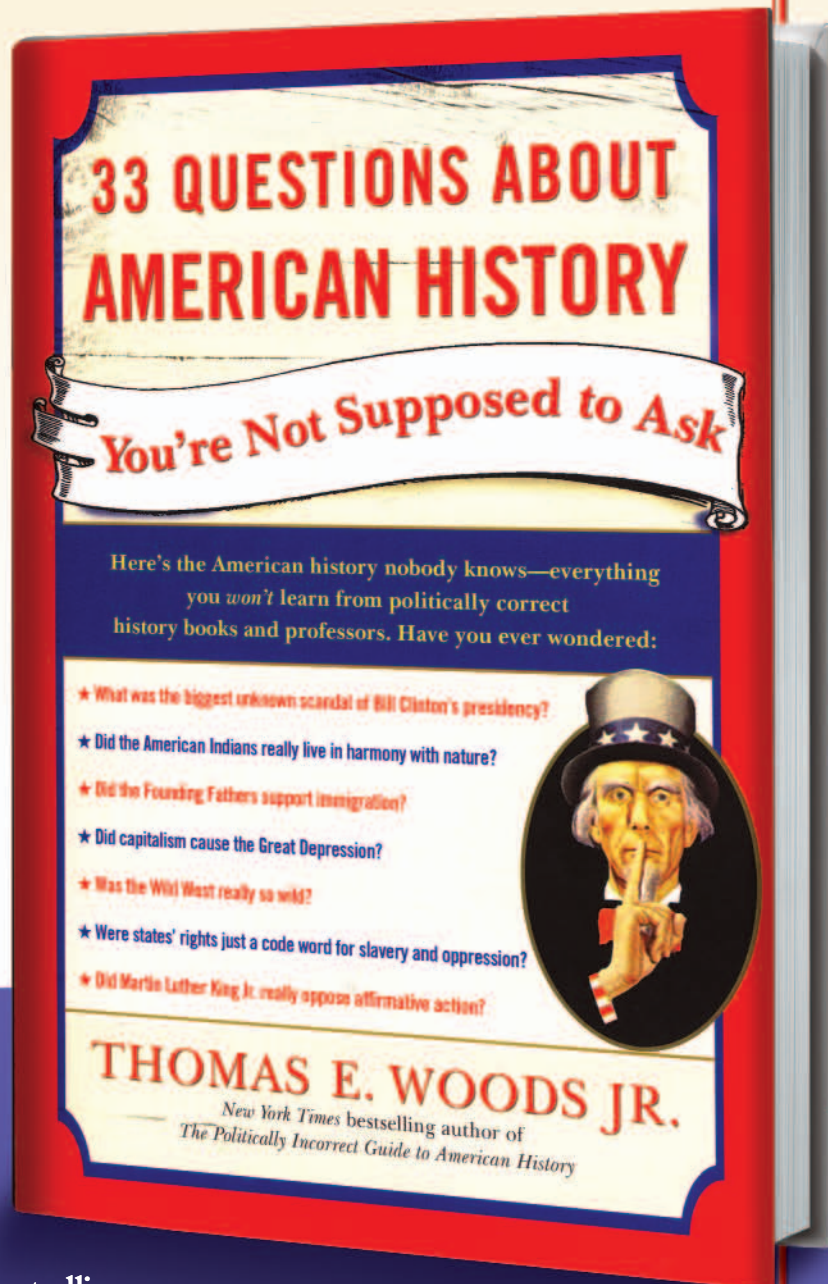
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